

HYPE WILLIAMS DJ MIKEQ TIM HECKER PARIAH INSTRA:MENTAL CARL CRAIG

# XLR8R

138

MAR / APR  
2011

ACCELERATING MUSIC & CULTURE

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## KODE 9 + THE SPACEAPE

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what moves you



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# explosions in the sky

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take care,  
take care



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CAROLINE *Verdugo Hills*



GRAILS *Deep Politics*

## ED'S RANT Picture This



TIM HECKER, WEATHERING A MONTREAL WINTER. SHOT BY VINNA LAUDICO.

Like pretty much every magazine out there, we too generally theme our issues. Whether it's something big and blatant (the Year-End Music Tech issue), or more just for internal idea-generating use (the How Many Digs Can We Take at Brostep issue), there's some running theme behind every edition of this here rag. Of course, rarely do these themes look like anything we expected them to when they were just a tiny idea in the *XLR8R* hive mind.

We call this one The Portraits Issue. But it's not because every single story found herein is a collection of highly stylized headshots. Sure, some of them boast that visual element—take for instance Vinna Laudico's stunning shots of Tim Hecker in the barren Montreal wilderness—but many take the idea of the portrait to another level, one that examines the personality behind our favorite music, rather than the visual images that represent it.

When we got the opportunity to interview Kode9 and The Spaceape for our cover, we were initially at a crossroads: How do we properly represent the story of dubstep's founding father in a portraits issue when the guy will hardly show his face in the media? Truth is, aside from coaxing out of him the most in-the-buff poses that any magazine's ever got of the man known as Steve Goodman, Ph.D, we figured an even better tack to take was to let him and his longtime partner-in-crime, The Spaceape, tell their story in their own words. So, on Kode9's recent press stop in SF, managic editor Shawn Reynaldo and I sat down with Goodman at a Tenderloin Thai restaurant, while Taio Cruz and BEP blared in the background, and got lowdown on everything about his and Spaceape's new album, *Black Sun*.

San Francisco writer Marke B managed to wrangle a portrait of an entire scene as he dug deep into the history of ballroom house, and examined how folks like New Jersey's DJ MikeQ, Atlanta's Angel X, and DC's Vjuan Allure are helping to spread the gospel of the long-underground phenomenon. If that's too much of a stretch, photographer Josh McNey's got the "real" thing to accompany the story on page 44.

Sometimes the portrait gets even more abstract, like in the case of Berlin-London hype machine Hype Williams (nope, not the hip-hop video guy), who'll hardly answer an interview question directly, let alone let on who they really are, leaving writer Rip Empson to consult numerous sources (evasive band email exchanges being just one of many) to cobble together a shall we say "impressionistic" portrait of the artist(s).

Of course, we're not going to let that kind of thing stop us from delivering to you in-depth personality profiles on the likes of Instra: Mental, Maya Jane Coles, KiNK, and Pariah. But needless to say, we're hard at work on a more official Artists Who Won't Show Their Faces issue, starring Burial, Mad Mike Banks, Zomby, and Buckethead.

—Ken Taylor, Editor

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Kode9 and The Spaceape, shot in London  
by Manuel Sepulveda for Optigram

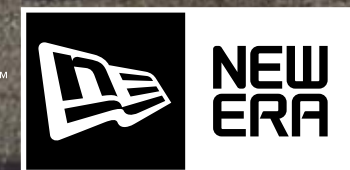
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## Contributors March / April 2011

### MARKE B.



Marke B. has been gay so long that his wrinkles have little cocktails, and those little cocktails have umbrellas with Sylvester's face screen-printed on them. Originally from Detroit, where he worked for Transmat Records and helped throw the city's first raves in the early 1990s, he now resides in San Francisco with his husband David and absolutely zero tiny dogs. He's the senior editor of the *SF Bay Guardian* and writes a weekly nightlife column called Super Ego. Marke wrote this issue's Strictly Ballroom story.

### VINNA LAUDICO



Photographer Vinna Laudico obtained her MFA from the Academy of Art University San Francisco, but she currently lives and works in Montreal, Canada. She's been shooting professionally since 2009, focusing on portraiture, editorial, and fashion photography. Her work has been described as emotive, romantic, dreamy, and a bit cinematic. She explores the simplicity and purity of people's character and representing them as they are. For this issue, she shot Tim Hecker in Montreal.

[vinnalaudico.com](http://vinnalaudico.com)

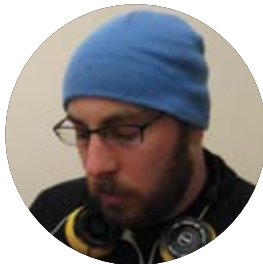
### OPTIGRAM



Under the name Optigram, Manuel Sepulveda Zambrano has created album covers for Ikonika, Terror Danjah, Harmonic 313, Squarepusher, and DJ Nate. His work for Hyperdub extends not only to Kode9 and The Spaceape's forthcoming album, *Black Sun*, but also to photographing (and treating) the two stars of this issue's cover. Zambrano also runs the electrofunk record label Citinite, which has put out records by Gosub, Her Bad Habit, Sweat.X, and AD Bourke. Naturally, he also designs most of the cover art, too.

[optigram.net](http://optigram.net)

### ROB GEARY



Like all good native Northeasterners, writer Rob Geary has made his peace with LA traffic in order to enjoy the lack of snow, excellent tacos, and Amoeba Music. His obsessions with *Top Chef*, bad sci-fi novels, and Blake Griffin's dunks are helping him heal the pain of following the Boston Celtics from afar. He uses a trackball instead of a mouse, does not have a Twitter account, and talked with Bulgarian producer KiNK for this issue.

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## WHAT'S NEW AT XLR8R.COM

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### PODCAST



#### TIM HECKER

Montreal experimentalist Tim Hecker isn't a guy too well known in the world of DJ mixes. In fact, the podcast that he's crafted for us is pretty much the only mix of his you'll find out there right now. Hecker has been treading the far leftfield end of the pool for years, so expect nothing less than the murkiest, most thrilling abstractions when you grab his exclusive mix over at [XLR8R.com/podcast](http://XLR8R.com/podcast). And of course, read more on the recording of his latest record, *Ravedeath, 1972*, on page 36.

Then get your dose of can't-miss hotness and sign up for our weekly podcast at [XLR8R.com](http://XLR8R.com), where we feature exclusive mixes from all across the spectrum, including recent sets from 2562, Nicolas Jaar, T. Williams, and tons more.

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#### MAR/APR NO. 138

Music and videos from Maya Jane Coles, KiNK, and Hype Williams

Tracks from Planet E's anniversary compilation

XLR8R podcasts from DJ MikeQ and Tim Hecker

An extended interview with Kode9

An Outbox with Wagonchrist's Luke Vibert

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#### JAN/FEB NO. 137

Music and videos from Ramadanman, Lone, DJ Cleo, and more

Untold on XLR8R TV

Exclusive XLR8R podcasts from Matthewdavid and Elijah & Skilliam

A GIF conversation with Dump FM

2010's best albums, tracks, podcasts, videos, and more

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Going to school and taking classes isn't exactly everyone's idea of a good time, but then again, not all schooling is like the kind of music production courses offered by NYC's Dubspot. The innovative institution has been humming along nicely since 2007, teaching all those who enroll how to mix and make just about any variation of electronic music they can imagine. Now, Dupspot is offering a brand-new service available to the world: a multi-functional online school and community where students will be directly connected with their instructors, receive weekly feedback on their productions, and be able to interact with their classmates for advice,

critiques, and general big-upping—all of which the school wants to hook you up with for free.

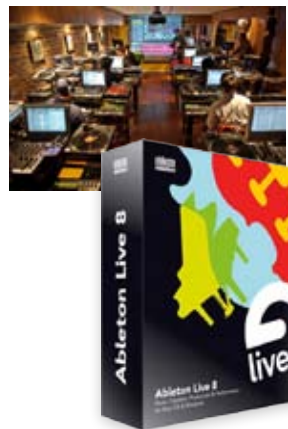
If you feel so inclined to enroll in Dubspot Online for absolutely no charge, and also wouldn't mind coming away from the bargain with a gratis copy of Ableton Live 8, you can enter to obtain those prizes—amounting in over \$5500 of gear and education—by sending us two things: first, we'd like to know what DJ/production moniker you plan on using, and where your idea for the name comes from; secondly, tell us what you'll call your first LP or mix album, and again, why you chose that title. So write us now, and you just might be the lucky

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KiNK



WITH AN OLD PC, A BULGARIAN PRODUCER PUTS HIS OWN BENT  
ON EXPERIMENTAL TECH-HOUSE.

Finding music was different before the Internet: Maybe a receptive record-shop owner let you listen to everything, or you picked up anything related to a good magazine article. Now, imagine your tastes run to experimental electronic music, it's the early 1990s, and—oh, yeah—you live in Sofia, Bulgaria.

"When I got interested in the electronic sound in 1992, you could hear one, two techno tracks in some late-night radio show," explains Strahil Velchev (a.k.a. KiNK). "I discovered experimental electronica and downtempo through a small record shop near the center of Sofia. The owner used to import CDs and cassettes by imprints like Warp and Ninja Tune... but I hadn't gotten the chance to buy many records, so when my friend told me that it's possible to make tracks on a cheap home PC, I thought that if I can't buy much new music, I can make some!"

Velchev came to producing out of pure necessity, transforming a trickle of leftfield electronic records he was exposed to and a copy of early production software Jeskola Buzz into a burgeoning career as an experimental techno producer and DJ. He developed his skills like a painter copying the old masters, attempting to replicate the classic sounds of the Roland TB-303 and drum machines. "I got an old Vermona analog synth in 1998," he explains. "The only thing I could do with it was simple subtractive synthesis, so I learned about waveforms and filters with my hands on the knobs. When I got my PC in 2000, and the modular software Buzz, I learned the rest mainly with experiments and reading some theory, but without knowing how other artists do it."

Velchev found demand as a remixer through his experiments, at first for local and then more international acts, including some of the Bulgarian pop variety. "I loved the fact that I could turn a Top 40-style track into something with a totally different context," he says. "I'm always happy when I can find a leading element in the original, like a good vocal or a nice melody, so I can build a track with KiNK sound aesthetics that still refers to the original." That aesthetic is a nicely recognizable stamp that takes more straightforward techno and house tracks into the twistier, slightly abrasive perversions of beats and synth tones like on those early Warp records, then embraces the glitchy aesthetic of mistakes. That doesn't mean Velchev has forgotten the poppier, housier records that filled Sofia's late-night airwaves. KiNK's "Existence," from last year's *Rachel* EP, with its canned snare rushes and relentless piano riff, is a straight-up, fist-pumping homage to Jeff Mills' original piano house epic, "Changes of Life." On his new 12", "Leko," Velchev imagines the same house pianos joyfully refracted through a funhouse mirror, computer loops showing defiantly; "Yako," on the flip, showcases KiNK's genre facility by turning the same tune into dissonant, trunk-rattling dubstep.

While Velchev is fast becoming Eastern Europe's go-to guy in a new generation of leftfield acid techno and house creators, he's also sought the assistance of collaborators Craig "Eviljack" Birmingham and Neville Watson, who've helped do the job that little shop in Sofia used to do: fill in the gaps he missed between disco and early Chicago and Detroit sounds. "Getting 'in' was a slow process, and it still continues," he says. "If I stand out now, it's because I'm faithful to this vision and I was patient enough to develop skills so I can reproduce any idea I have in my head."

KiNK's *Rachel* EP is out on now on Ovum.  
[myspace.com/strahil](http://myspace.com/strahil)

# MAYA JANE COLES

A YOUNG LONDONER INFUSES TECH-HOUSE WITH DEEP VIBES AND DUBWISE SOUNDS.



Twenty-three-year-old London house producer Maya Jane Coles might seem to have appeared out of nowhere, but it looks like she's not going anywhere for a while. Her 2010 single, "What They Say" (Real Tone), exploded upon release, topping DJ charts worldwide and attracting critical and public adoration. It was simple, riveting, and classic: an infectious vocal sample riding a descending organ riff padded with snapping drums, it's the kind of subtle tune that gets stuck in your head for days. "It was definitely a surprise," Coles says about the traction it received. "I've made music that's a lot more personal and special to me, but as an artist you can't really control the success of your tracks, unfortunately!" The track's basic construction and trilling organ marry a classicist ideal to a modern UK house sound preoccupied with techno's clean lines. However, Coles claims she's "not looking specifically to make retro sounds," but you can't help but notice the richness

of the sounds and their chunky drum beats. Her influences—Radio Slave, John Tejada, and Steve Bug—are discernible in her penchant for subtly powerful drum programming, brilliant chord progressions, and smooth, accessible textures. Her refreshing simplicity is the earned product of eight years of practice, and her releases so far showcase her diverse, confident take on melodic house. Coles' mature sense of refinement extends itself to her other endeavors—she's not just a house producer. She's also one half of live bass-music duo She Is Danger, a collaboration with singer Lena Cullen that Coles calls "completely free thinking." She says the fruitful partnership has resulted in "loads of live shows and an album in progress," but even more promising is her Nocturnal Sunshine alias, which emerged last year with a much-lauded release on Lick My Deck. Under that moniker she makes reflective, subtle dubstep, influenced by her sharpened

house sound—"All the [types of] music I make kind of bounce off each other," she explains—and retaining her knack for unforgettable vocal hooks. Nocturnal Sunshine earned support from scene stalwarts like Scuba and Skream ("I've always been heavily influenced by dub," she admits), and Coles promises that "there will definitely be some more in 2011." As for other future plans? An album, of course. "My album will be the release that fully represents me the best so far... Not following any specific genre, it's just electronic music the way I want to make it," she says proudly. "It will feature tracks with my vocals, some instrumentals, and some really cool guest vocalists, which I'm super-excited about." She's playing it careful right now, so there's no release date planned for the album, but with a string of recent and future releases on Dogmatik, Real Tone, Hypercolour, and now Mobilee, we've got plenty to tide us over.

"Beat Faster" is out now on Mobilee.  
soundcloud.com/mayajanecoles

WORDS ANDREW RYCE

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## HYPE WILLIAMS

AN ALMOST-ANONYMOUS DUO DRAGS A HIP-HOP VIDEO MAKER'S  
NAME DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE.



Hype Williams, the enigmatic Berlin-London duo consisting of Russian-born Inga Copeland and London's Dean Blunt, is not your typical band. They're not in the game to promote themselves, create a brand, or end up on MTV—in fact, they'd like to stay out of the game altogether (which may give some credence to the fact that a couple by the names of Denna Frances and Father Ronnie Krayola is often credited with "creating" the band as a sort of relay art project). Both Copeland and Blunt (who often goes by "D-Blunt") have dabbled in writing, photography, and the fine arts, but D-Blunt quickly shrugs off questions about that background. "Inga has a degree in something theoretical—I forget what—and I used to be a boxer, 'til I lost a fight with an Arab," he says, presumably attempting to mess with us.

As for their music and visual aesthetics, those too are as obtuse as they are inviting. Check out their video for the tinny, trippy, lo-fi track "Chatline," and you'll find Copeland washing Blunt's hair in super-slo-

mo. For the clunky, bluesy raga "Get Choong and Look at the Sky," they fashion hats out of tinfoil and hang around a churchyard. Catch them live and you might find a stage populated by several performers, Copeland and Blunt among them, hidden behind makeshift masks.

There's a playful innocence to their performance and their music. Hype Williams—no relation to the hip-hop-video maker of the same name, we should mention—is about the feeling of the moment, about remaining open and reactive. As Copeland told *The Wire* recently, conveying elements of humor and atmosphere are tantamount to creating the music itself.

D-Blunt grew up in East London at a time when American hip-hop music and culture loomed large, inexorably informing his early years. On their first full-vision LP, *One Nation*, the tracks—many of which are untitled—are permeated by retro-hip-hop synths, and evoke a hazy and crackly, almost cinematic atmosphere. Yet *One*

*Nation* is also a product of diverse musical roots. The record has flourishes of '70s and '80s radio pop (an obvious touchstone, if their cover of Sade's "Sweetest Taboo" is any indication) on tracks like "Your Girl Smells Chung When She Wears Dior," and gritty, loaded subs give it a heaviness that echoes underground dub and dance, particularly jungle and hardcore.

For *One Nation*, D-Blunt says the group was looking for a counterpart to the current approach to making electronic music, which he claims generally tends toward "over-intellectualization" and over-production. The duo's lo-fi sound is rough and simple, the drumming far from coached, as ambient sounds and spoken-word samples float in and out—so much that you get a sense you're listening to the musical expression of a 48-hour sleepless walkabout with Copeland and D-Blunt. Conveniently, when asked about what went into making *One Nation*, the group collectively replies, "48 sleepless hours and a lotta pills."

*One Nation* is out this month on Hippos in Tanks.  
myspace.com/hypewilliams

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PARIAH

NO OUTCAST, ARTHUR CAYZER'S SAMPLE-PHONIC BEATS ARE ITCHING TO BE HEARD.



Arthur Cayzer isn't unique among his producer peers for venerating Burial, declaring the influential artist's *Untrue* to be one of the greatest things he's heard in the last few years. "I'm probably pretty indebted to that album," says the 22-year-old, now living in East London. "I would probably never use vocals in my production if it wasn't for Burial." On the other hand, he may stand out for being a huge fan of the Canadian hardcore act Cursed, which wrote the song that inspired Cayzer to go by the name Pariah when fashioning his own particular brand of melancholic, post-dubstep bass beats. "I love the whole hardcore scene as well. They do have this incredible emotion," says Cayzer. "It might be different kinds of emotions, but it hits you just as hard. That's something that I tried to hopefully replicate in a way, but just re-contextualize, with my music."

Cayzer doesn't exactly have a long production history; after fiddling with Logic on a friend's computer as a teen,

he got a MacBook in late 2008 and self-released his first single, the dusty and gritty "Detroit Falls," shortly thereafter. Nevertheless, there is certainly a sense of urgency with both Cayzer's music—from "Detroit Falls" to the superlative work on his eclectic and polished *Safehouse* EP, which dropped in October on the venerable R&S label—and his career. Part of it comes from his self-described loose and spontaneous production style and his use of vocals, a mixture of Motown samples and '90s R&B (he won't tell us the exact sources) that's been a stylistic fixture as he finds his own voice. "The little phrases mean a lot to me, but I don't think it's the most important thing," he says. "People can interpret it themselves. It creates an extra melody and something more human. Electronic music can be very cold sometimes."

Cayzer checks off many of the standard electronic music influences, like Aphex Twin, Boards of Canada, and Brian Eno, and also feels a nostalgia for jungle and

its golden age, though he was too young to experience it firsthand, instead having to cycle through singles like Doc Scott's "It's Yours" and old radio sets after the fact. He's also been DJing recently, which has made him focus more on tight, dancefloor-focused arrangements, like "Orpheus," the b-side of "Detroit Falls," which is a dubbed-out thumper that references Burial's style in a few ways, not least of which is the vocal sample, taken from Thelma Houston's disco classic "Don't Leave Me This Way."

His own style is of course taking root, and Cayzer plans to work on a full-length album soon. "I'm going to try and take it away from the dancefloor while still having roots in dance music," he offers, but not before he finishes his studies at Queen Mary in East London first. The proposed topic of his thesis is religious tensions as reflected in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, but the tragedy, at least for dance fans, is the wait.

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 THE DEBUT ALBUM FROM THE TORONTO TRIO

# PLANETARY EVOLUTION

10 GAME-CHANGING MOMENTS IN PLANET E HISTORY



PHOTO: TODD SINES

As Carl Craig's pioneering second-wave techno label Planet E turns 20, we chatted with the longtime Detroit-based producer, DJ, remixer, and label owner about some of his, and the company's, finest moments.

**1. STARTING PLANET E**

When I started the label, I released [my] 69 [record] *4 Jazz Funk Classics* and it was a big deal for me, because not only did I have my own independence, but I had done it as an underground thing, where there was no information about who was doing it. It was quite interesting to get people who didn't know who did it and hearing what people had to say about it.

**2. SIGNING RECLOOSE**

I used to order these sandwiches at Russell Street Deli down in Detroit's Eastern Market. I ordered a carry-out and my wife at the time looks in the bag and there's three sandwiches in there. One of the sandwiches had written on it "Demo Tape on Rye." That was really quite an amazing and funny experience, and with him, Recloose, it really fits his personality because he's really quirky and funny like that. So I knew when I saw that, I had to listen to that tape—I couldn't *not* listen to the tape. And the rest is history.

**3. RELEASING MOODYMANN'S SILENT INTRODUCTION**

The talking, the narration that caused so much controversy—all that. That was the first time that I ever dealt with anything

that had all that controversy. He made some statements—Detroit militant statements—that were more him being silly than anything that he ever believed. Of course, it always seems like when it comes down to race, that it's a one-sided story with a lot of folks, and I think people got that kind of concept from it. But he's not that kind of guy.

**4. SEEING MOODYMANN'S PROMO VIDEO FOR THE FIRST TIME**

I gave Moodymann a camera to shoot what would be considered a promo video, and what I got back was just incredible—just legendary. He goes to a liquor store and tries to buy liquor with an IOU. He's got this girl, topless, braiding his hair. It's really on the edge. It's so legendary that releasing it had to be

done right, and I didn't think we could do it right. But I just found the tape the other day, so I'll have to dump it to a file and give it to him so he can do whatever he wants with it. But he was young then, so maybe he's not feeling it anymore.

**5. WORKING WITH JAZZ GROUP TRIBE**

Working with Marcus Belgrave, Wendell Harrison, Phil Ranelin—that was a big deal for me, especially because I had wanted to do it for such a long time. I had talked to Marcus and asked him about it and he'd say, "Yeah, we want to do it," and Marcus was really busy, but when I met Wendell, he really helped to make it happen and we did this album that I think is really fantastic. Tribe was a big one.



**6. STARTING ANTIDOTE RECORDS WITH LACKSIDAISYCAL (A.K.A. TA'RAACH)**

I got involved in some hip-hop stuff here and there, starting a label that was called Antidote with Lacksidaisycal. He worked with Erykah Badu and Big Tone. So that was getting my feet wet in the hip-hop world and learning a little bit more that I needed to stick with my roots instead of trying to walk outside of them so much.

**7. HAVING J DILLA REMAKE "PEOPLE MAKE THE WORLD GO ROUND"**

Having Dilla remake The Innerzone Orchestra's "People Make the World Go Round." I think we only had two situations with Dilla—that, and the Big Tone track. Dilla had let him use a beat on that, which was great.

**8. RECORDING THE INNERZONE ORCHESTRA ALBUM WITH FRANCISCO MORA**

We had Rodney Whittaker on there, Craig Taborn... That was

a really fantastic time. The first one that we did together, which was a jazz version of "Bug in the Bassbin," was really a major thing for me. Francisco is the one who turned me on to Sun Ra and electric Miles [Davis] stuff. He was really a mentor for me, for my excursions into jazz. When he brought in Rodney Whittaker to play on the "Bug in the Bassbin" thing, it just worked on that particular section. I think if it was a day earlier, a day later, it probably would have fell apart, but that day, it just worked. That was a fantastic time.

**9. GETTING NOMINATED FOR A GRAMMY FOR REMIXING JUNIOR BOYS IN 2008**

The Grammy nomination was a big one, I can't forget that. That was a great time. I wasn't expecting it—I didn't know it was even submitted. I didn't know how things got submitted to the Grammys; it just happened and I got nominated. I was really happy about it and I went all the way out there, to LA, to be part of it and, of course, I got pissed off when I didn't win.

That's just the way it goes. People get pissed off over less important things, like when their football team doesn't win [laughs]. It was a truly amazing thing for me.

**10. FOUNDING THE DETROIT ELECTRONIC MUSIC FESTIVAL**

The first two years were great years. And definitely the first year was beyond incredible because it wasn't gonna happen! It got kinda forced to happen, which was great, but there technically wasn't any money until Friday at six o'clock [laughs], and it started Saturday at 12. But, the first day, with Kenny Larkin and Stacey Pullen closing out the main stage, we were looking at this whole sea of people out there—this is something that we've always wanted to see—any type of festival could happen that spotlighted our music. As an artist, that's one of your greatest compliments, when you can play in your hometown and it looks like you're playing some crazy huge-ass rock festival.

planet-e.net



FIVE STAR

# RAINBOW ARABIA

THE LA.-BASED GENRE MASHERS TELL US ABOUT THE MAJOR INFLUENCES ON THEIR NEW ALBUM, *BOYS AND DIAMONDS*.



**DJ BEPPE LODA'S 1985 MIX**

DJ Loda was part of the Italo-disco scene, and a resident at the Typhoon club from 1980 to 1987. This mix goes through a collage of electronic sounds mixed with funky guitar riffs and Kraftwerk synth leads. He has a way of going off into totally different tangents, which he somehow makes flow perfectly.



PHOTO: MAGDA WOSINSKA



**OMD'S ORCHESTRAL MANOEUVRES IN THE DARK**

OMD's keyboard sounds are points of reference when adding sounds to our songs. The opening to "Almost" is probably the best opening synth line in a song, and we love how they use hissing hi-hat sounds. And "Electricity" is one of our all-time favorite songs.



**SCIENTIST'S SCIENTIST RIDS THE WORLD OF THE EVIL CURSE OF THE VAMPIRES**

Scientist has his signature sound in dub with his bleeps and reverb crashes. He made dub almost sound like electronic music. This album has probably some of the best production of drums, and is also filled with evil laughs and lines like "I want blood."



**CONGOTRONICS 2: BUZZ 'N' RUMBLE FROM THE URB 'N' JUNGLE**

This was the second release of the *Congotronics* series. It is filled with electrified likembes and makeshift percussion instruments, like spray cans and car parts. All of this is played through their homemade soundsystem. It has the sound of primitive electronic trance music.



**GIORGIO MORODER'S "FROM HERE TO ETERNITY"**

This song kicks ass. The ultimate dance song, with a tight beat and an arpeggiation that fades in, bringing you to Moroder's futuristic disco sound. Plus, he had such smooth, cool style.

*Boys and Diamonds* is out this month on Kompakt. [rainbowarabia.wordpress.com](http://rainbowarabia.wordpress.com)

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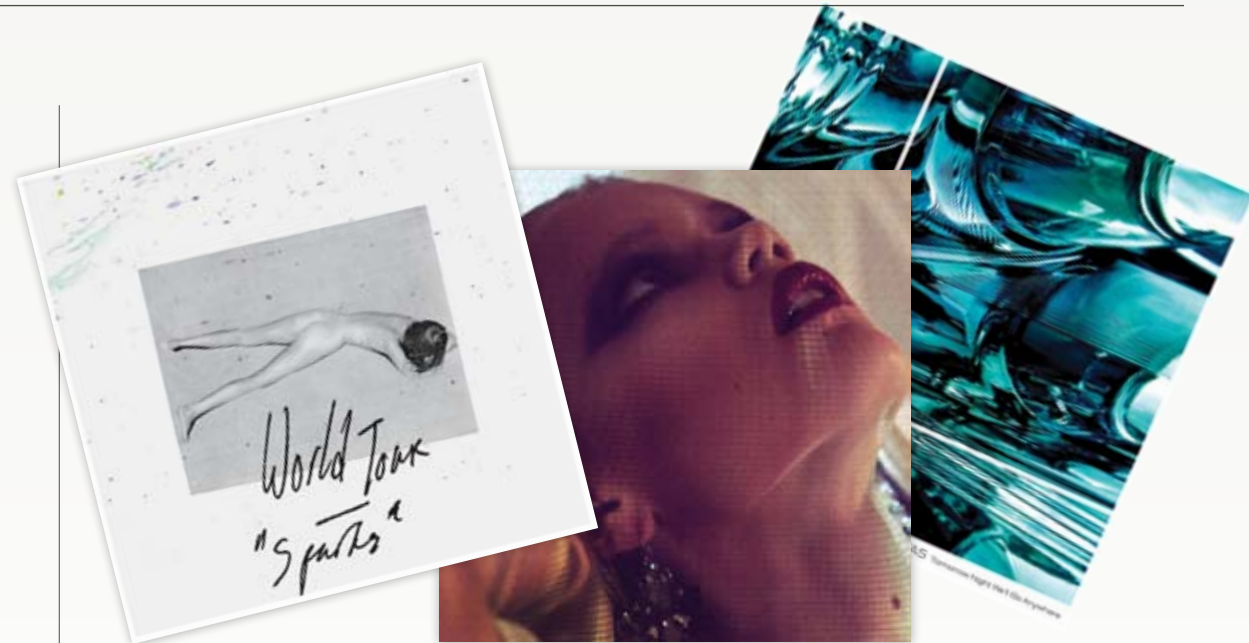
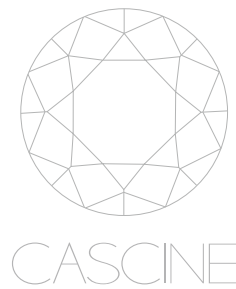
THE FUTURE OF SOUND

LABELS WE LOVE  
**CASCINE**

SCANDO POP AND EMBASSY RECORDS COMBINE FOR AN EVEN MORE INTERNATIONAL AFFAIR

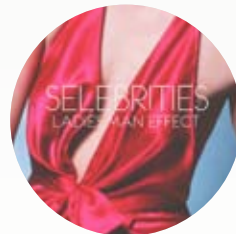
It was only the start of summer 2010 when Jeff Bratton and Sandra Croft crossed paths and bonded immediately over a mutual love of Scandinavian pop and the in-house cover versions of classic hits released by Embassy Records in the '50s and '60s. Driven by that shared passion for precious, hook-driven music and their discovery of Finnish band Shine 2009, Bratton and Croft decided to form "an experimental pop label," calling it Cascine. Now, less than a year later, the imprint has released six singles/EPs by an array of burgeoning artists hard at work mining the disparate permutations of pop music. As Bratton's and Croft's endeavor continues to grow into its recognizable brand with Shine 2009's forthcoming full-length album and a brand-new EP from one of the label's strongest producers, Chad Valley, we take a look at three EPs that helped put Cascine on the map. *Patric Fallon*

cascine.us



**SHINE 2009 ASSOCIATES EP**

Sounding like the marriage of Primal Scream's drug-addled psych-pop and Chapterhouse's electronic shoegaze, Cascine's first release is a record of calm, collected dance-pop cuts by Helsinki's Shine 2009. Three equally strong singles—the groovy opener "Naturally," the club-friendly "Higher," and the airy ballad "New Rules"—all vie for your attention on the EP's first half, while instrumental remixes and acoustic versions of those catchy tunes help round out the flipside of *Associates*. The seven-song record seems to effortlessly encapsulate Cascine's taste for both the past and future of popular music.



**SELEBRITIES LADIES MAN EFFECT EP**

Celebrities may be the grittiest outfit on Cascine's roster, the raw *Ladies Man Effect* EP its most ramshackle collection of songs. But it's within the frayed edges of Maria Usbeck's coy vocal delivery, Jer Robert Paulin's simplistic guitar riffs, and the vintage-inspired production of Max Peterson that *Selebrities'* heart and soul exist. Each of the four songs on the EP seem to call upon different eras of Peter Hook's and Bernard Summer's musical careers for inspiration, so it's the delivery of those ideas that holds the most weight. Thankfully, the Brooklyn band makes sure to package each infectious song with refreshing nuance and youthful exuberance.



**CHAD VALLEY CHAD VALLEY EP**

Were Cascine ever called upon to give the world its answer to Delorean's *Subiza*, Chad Valley's self-titled EP would be its best bet. Through the swaying branches of palm trees and over the hot sands of Ibiza, the Oxford-based artist shoots his funky disco-house productions straight into the atmosphere, leaving trails of ecstasy in their wake. Valley sports Auto-Tuned vocal hooks, smooth R&B melodies, slap-and-pop basslines, shimmering synth tones, and thumping club beats on the four original cuts featured on *Chad Valley*, and keeps his heart displayed prominently on his sleeve all the while, too. Grab this EP, and you'll be spinning "Ensoniq Funk" and "Anything" on repeat for weeks.



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ELEMENTS

# NO JACKET REQUIRED

OUR RESIDENT STYLIST ANDREW PORTER WAXES CASUAL ON SPRING'S MUST-HAVES



1

**YMC SLUB SHIRT**  
\$65

I love striped shirts, but the rest of the world does not. People associate the basic striped tee with sailors, small children, Pablo Picasso, and "jailbirds." Apparently, it's not cool to share similar shirting with your five-year-old cousin. I've got the memo several times, but I'm going to keep being me. Take that, ex-girlfriends! For my fellow lovers of stripes, I present you with the YMC Slub shirt—the thinking man's striped shirt. It says, "Hey, I dig stripes like a kindergarten, but I also feel this Bridget Riley op-art-ish vibe you see happening around mid-torso."

[youmustcreate.com](http://youmustcreate.com)

2

**PENDLETON WOOL MACBOOK CASE**  
\$44

Pendleton blanket wool saw a lot of use last year, and for good reason: It looks really amazing. That said, I've seen enough of it in the outerwear department. Whenever I see somebody in a Pendleton blanket coat, I immediately think of *Dumb & Dumber* when Jim Carrey and Jeff Daniels get all Aspen'd out—not the best look. For those like me, who love the fabric but don't need to make a statement, I direct you to Etsy. Sellers like Ginny Vyvan are making some amazing accessories at great prices.

[etsy.com](http://etsy.com)

3

**NIKE ACG LUNAR VENGEANCE**  
\$120

I recently found a picture of myself from about 10 years ago. I looked past the 10 extra pounds on my face and the Benetton hat on my head to discover that I was wearing one hell of a teal-and-purple Nike ACG coat. I loved that stuff—the '90s Nike ACG line was top shelf. These jammers strike me as a modernized return to that time. Very retro-future-mountaineering with a splash of "I don't want to be that bearded guy in Red Wings" kind of vibe. Two thumbs up!

[nike.com](http://nike.com)

4

**WINTERCHECK LIZZIE SUNGLASSES**  
\$60

Wintercheck sunglasses are a great option for those who want a unique pair of frames at an affordable price. These grey frames look great and the red tips really make them pop. Additionally, Winterchecks are made in the USA and come with a neat waterproof carrying case. The built-in blinders are not for everybody; they have a bit of a mad-scientist/super-villain feel to them, but I'm okay with that. Heck, at \$60, it's hard to turn these down.

[wintercheckfactory.com](http://wintercheckfactory.com)

Read Andrew Porter's weekly Casual Fridays column at [XLR8R.com](http://XLR8R.com).



## NIAMAJ STOP IT! VIDEO REMIX CONTEST

Be Real Records is celebrating Niamaj's sophomore album release with yet another REMIX contest. This time, seeing is believing. Stop It! is the first single off the album and we're giving you everything you need to make the official music video; Green Screens, Alpha Channel, 780p, 480p, & Multiple Angles... No Time For Words, so show us what you can do.

Check out the The NIAMAJ Stop It! Video Mixer for ideas: [www.berealrecords.com/niamajstudio](http://www.berealrecords.com/niamajstudio)

**NO RULES:** just post to YouTube, Vimeo or any public site and send us the link. The Be Real Records staff will be judging on creativity & viralness. Video voted best will be rewarded with an Apple iPad Wi-Fi 16GB, those that come close can win iPod Nanos, iPod Shuffles, Clout Hoodies & T-Shirts.

Only submissions received before July 1, 2011 will be accepted. Winners will be announced on July 31, 2011 on [berealrecords.com](http://berealrecords.com)

DOWNLOAD FILES HERE: [www.mediafire.com/berealrecords](http://www.mediafire.com/berealrecords)



Prizes will be delivered within 2 weeks after contest ends.

Please send submissions and questions about the video remix contest to [remix@berealrecords.com](mailto:remix@berealrecords.com)

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# SUNSHINE SUPERMEN

ON THEIR SECOND LP, **KODE9 AND THE SPACEAPE** PONDER THE APOCALYPSE,  
GRAPHIC NOVELS, AND A BALLARDIAN WORLD OF BLACK SUNS.





After a busy year of releases on his genre-defining Hyperdub label, and a critically acclaimed book entitled *Sonic Warfare: Sound, Affect, and the Ecology of Fear*, dubstep's godfather, Kode9 (a.k.a. Steve Goodman), is about to release his second full-length with longtime collaborator The Spaceape (a.k.a. Stephen Gordon), entitled *Black Sun*.

We spoke with Goodman on a recent stop in San Francisco, and Gordon from London, about their joint history, The Beatles, turning a book into a sound installation, and what the duo has taken away from the LA beat scene.

**XLR8R:** You've said that with this album, you had really wanted to try to set aside time to go deeper on production, and instead of spending two hours at a time in the studio, maybe spend days at a time. Did that actually happen?

Kode9: It did—not as much as I wanted, never as much as I wanted. But from August last year onwards, it was great actually: I wasn't DJing, I wasn't doing a book, I was just getting up and working on music. Fucking bliss, 'cause it doesn't happen often enough. The second half of last year is when it was like, this isn't going to get finished unless I probably enter that zone.

**Did you take a break from teaching at University of East London?**

I had a sabbatical. I'm toying with the idea of taking a more permanent break, I enjoyed working in the studio so much last year.

**I've seen you take issue with the notion that music, when it's examined academically—a lot of people say that when you examine it that way it loses something, the energy and the fun, which you don't agree with. How do you go about keeping it energetic and interesting and not losing its essence or vibe when you're doing your lectures?**

I suppose for me, the difference there is that I distinguish between academic and conceptual. Like most people, I find academic writing pretty boring. That's not what I'm trying to defend; I'm trying to defend people that write conceptually.

**How much music is actually involved in your lectures, or is it discussion?**

Mostly the classes I've been teaching the last few years are film sound. We just watch a huge amount of film clips, and there's a kind of vocabulary of film sound—and, less film music, but film sound—concepts. And if you have a grasp of these concepts, it makes it easier to understand how soundtracks are constructed and therefore how to make them for yourself. We watch films and go through all these concepts, things to do with

disembodied voices, on-screen/off-screen diegetic sound, notions of counterpoint to do with sound and image as opposed to just musical elements.

**Does it ever at any point turn into Dr. Kode9 talking about dubstep in these classes?**

No, I'd probably kill myself [*laughs*]. I don't talk about music that I'm involved in.

**Are you working on a second part to the book right now?**

Yeah, it's a sequel [*laughs*]. It's basically an attempt to flesh out, in a slightly more accessible way, to log the ideas of the book via interviews. It's all going to be made up of interviews with scientists, sound artists, musicians, people working in the sound of advertising and branding, hopefully some military people—although they are really hard to get a hold of—and some cultural theorists. It's really just coloring in the book with detail and personal experience.

**You've been publicly talking about the book with a PowerPoint-style presentation. Is that informing how the new book is going to come together?**

I have been doing a lot of presentations, but the thing that I suppose pushed me towards it is these series of sound-art installations I've been doing. I did one in Berlin a couple of years ago, one in Sheffield last year, and I'll do one in New York from May until July this year. Which, again, is an attempt to change the book and put it in another media, another format, like build the book into a room. The initial idea was a dark room with lots of big sub-bass woofers and ultrasound speakers—directional ultrasound. The idea was to create a really quiet room, a silent room, but a room that had deep infra-sound vibrations and little pockets of sound that you would only hear as you walked around the room because of the directional audio. So there'd be little bubbles of sound that you'd have to discover by walking around in the dark. It was that, and wanting to develop more content for sound installations. The one in New York is going to have a one-hour fictional-audio documentary.

**What sort of venue is it in?**

It's in a gallery called Art in General. And I'm like, "Oh, if I'm going to go around interviewing people to generate content for the installation, I may as well collect them together in a book." Also, reading some of the reviews of the first the book, it's clear that—and I knew this would be the case—people were slightly hostile to some of the theory in it, which I kind of expected.

**Tell us a little more about that. Are other academics critical of it?**

No, not really. I don't feel I've had much response from academia, because it takes much longer to get an academic response. Just the thing that I knew was going to happen: people that know my music are like, "Cool, he's done a book, I'll read it," and then, like, "Fucking hell," after a couple of pages [laughs]. Which I knew was going to happen. There's a series of disclaimers in the introduction about that kind of thing, but I didn't want to water the book down. That's the last thing I wanted to do, to dumb it down so anyone could read it because of the kind of book it was.

**You have so many different hats you wear, so to speak, with DJing, the label, production, academic work. Do you find yourself gravitating towards certain roles more as you get older, or is it always in flux?**

I'm trying to delegate things that I don't want to continue doing [laughs]. I'm not running the label on my own anymore; I've got someone who is the label manager, who's

helping massively, particularly with the press side of things... I didn't get into running a label to run a label, and that's what it's become. Last year, so much stuff happened without me even noticing—I'm like, "Fucking hell." Then you find yourself with this huge pile of paperwork for mechanical royalties. I could be selling drawing pins—it's all bureaucracy. You might as well be selling tires or socks.

**It was a busy year, though, for Hyperdub last year.**

Yeah, we had almost 20 singles and three albums. I'd be happy to just make music and write and be paid and play live. Everything else is a distraction, like teaching. I'm not sure how long I can... you know, as you get older you can't keep doing everything.

**What do you see the role of the label playing these days? Could those artists have the same successes on their own without having this label force behind it?**

I love that artists have their own labels, like Ikonika, Cooly G... Terror Danjah just set up a label again. I think that's great, 'cause right from the beginning, even before I give someone feedback on their music, I say, "Just set up your own label. Stop relying on other people to like your music." Obviously, that can work and it can not work for people. I think it's great that the artists on the label are doing their own thing. The label is music I feel passionately about and like a lot. Hopefully, it's a kind of example of how erratic you can be with an A&R policy and everything will be okay. "Erratic" is not the right word—I don't find it erratic. But people seem to find it erratic. People seem to be surprised that I've got this and then this and then this. That kind of confuses me a little bit to the point where, last year, I actually started to believe that thing that people were saying, and I just actually lost the plot altogether and I stopped being able to tell whether I liked something or not. Stopped being able to tell if something was right for the label or not.

**How do you know?**

Well, you don't know. That's the point. It just feels right or it doesn't feel right. I think I've described it before as, if you get a battery and you put it on your tongue and you get a little bit of an electric shock, that's how you know.

**Sonically, the label definitely explores a lot of different sounds. Do you think that parallels the increasing fragmentation of the UK scene?**

In a way, maybe it's helped that fragmentation, but from my point of view, I see it more as a bridge, a connect, a

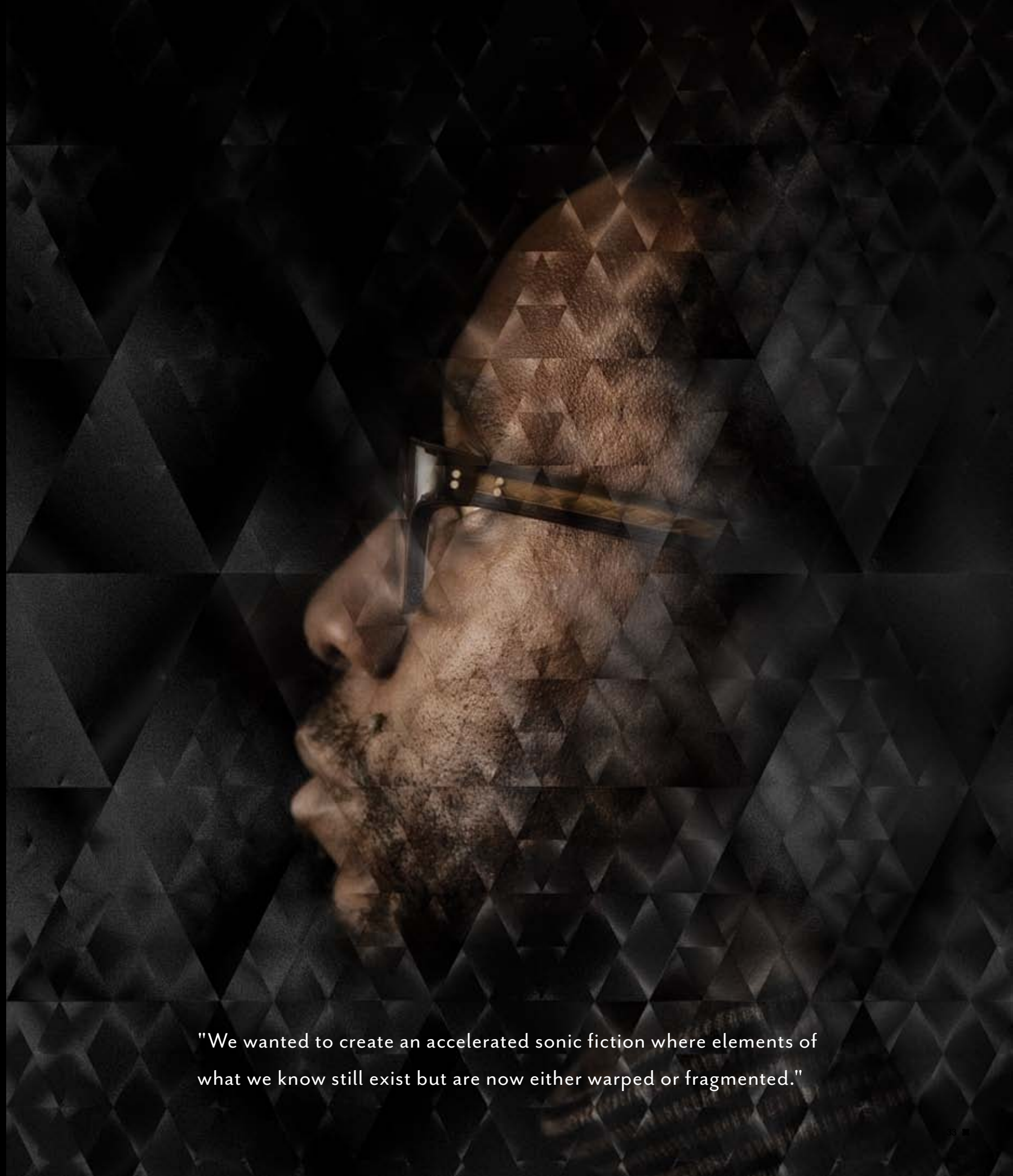
patch bay for connecting together all that fragmentation. I don't think fragmentation itself is necessarily that interesting—it's the UK, everything is falling apart, and...? Okay, there is actually no one thing that is amazing enough to hold it all together. That's not so great, really. Fifteen years ago it was jungle and that was holding everything together, or it was UK garage, or.... My sets, I play dubstep, grime, funky, other stuff, and maybe a bit of jungle and so on. Same with the label. It's a kind of hub holding these diverging strands together with some kind of direction. I don't think it's so erratic, the stuff that's on the label. It seems like it has some sort of consistency.

**Do you think genre descriptors are important anymore?**

I think so. I'm not against genre. I just think it's important that people in genres constantly question the genre and slag it off because ultimately, it's words and at a certain point the usefulness of that word... a genre name is there to help you clarify, communicate with people about what is what, and what works, or to pigeonhole stuff. At a certain point, the reality and the word don't resonate together very accurately... What happened with me and dubstep—at a certain point that word and *some* of what I was doing didn't connect. That's why sometimes I've come across as, like, I won't say the word. When I've said to people that Hyperdub is not a dubstep label, it's not because I'm against dubstep—it's because some of the stuff we release on Hyperdub isn't dubstep [laughs]. Like the Darkstar album is not dubstep; it's got nothing to do with it.

**A lot of these naming conventions are obviously driven by journalists' need to label things. Do you think those kind of cultural filters are important anymore?**

I think they're more important now than ever, because we're more snowed under with random bullshit, too much information, shit music. You need filters. So I think more than ever you need good filters with good taste and a sense of the future, and a sense of the direction things are moving in. That's as important for other writers and readers as it is for labels and producers and artists. Okay, so some artists don't read anything and just sit in their studios, but I've always been interested in reading music writing. Because, here's the thing: Good conceptual music writing gives me musical ideas. The one thing you can do faster in writing than you can do in music is splice together ideas. You don't have to splice together two sounds. It's quicker to splice together the ideas and experiment with an idea before you even experiment with a combination of sounds,



"We wanted to create an accelerated sonic fiction where elements of what we know still exist but are now either warped or fragmented."

or make connections between things you wouldn't normally make connections with.

**You seem to have an affinity for mystery, whether it's not having your picture shown or overloading your music with subtext with where it's coming from. Is that a response to the too-much-information culture?**

Maybe it's just like I don't want to ram myself down people's throats. I think a bit of secrecy and a bit of... making information scarce again—I clearly see some value in that.

**In that respect of seeing things go back underground...**

I like the idea that it's getting slightly harder for people to [find information], because it's so easy for people to get things.

**But there are still unique regional experiences, and I think that despite how much someone might know about London's club scene or whatever, if you don't visit it you don't have an experiential understanding of it. Where are those pockets for you in London that you tap into, whether or not it's finding new people for the label or just for your own enjoyment?**

I mean, I probably get most music from a network of friends. I used to be on Rinse every week for about four or five years, and for a while after that I kept listening, but I hardly listen to Rinse anymore because I'm podcast-overloaded. I almost prefer to not know what's going on on Rinse, and just be in my own little world and not try and be pursuing the biggest tracks as fast, because I did that for quite a while and I'm happy to do my own thing and not watch everything. You know, Plastic People is still an amazing place for me, and it's not so much FWD >> anymore, but there are other nights that I just randomly go to. And occasionally I do these all-night things from 10 to 6 where I just play whatever I feel like. Plastic People is still a key place for me, where I can hear music and the way it sounds is completely inspirational. And it's kind of misleading, actually, because you end up making music to play on that system and it will sound shit everywhere else.

**When we interviewed Four Tet, he sorta had the same thing to say. Specific to Plastic People, he made tracks for that club, informed by those experiences. Which is a really unique thing. I don't get the sense that people are doing that in, like, New York.**

I mean, obviously dubstep had its infatuation with sound, physical sound, and obviously a lot of that came from Plastic People, but, you know, it kind of inherited it and took it elsewhere. And one of the positive things about dubstep is that it reminded people about the importance of the sound being loud enough but not painful. Maybe, the

most important legacy of dubstep has been reminding people of that. There is something very powerful about that.

**When you talk about dubstep's legacy... I'm really curious what you think about dubstep in the US and how it's mutated in different ways?**

I mean, I don't really know. It's really off my radar, to be honest. I hear the odd horror story about friends of mine who had to play on certain line-ups, but to be honest, it's kind of off my radar. Obviously, I've heard of brostep [laughs].

**Even Rusko was sort of denouncing the brostep thing that he accidentally kickstarted. I know you can't necessarily take responsibility for where it went, but...**

No, I mean, once you give birth to something, you don't have control over it. There are certain moments in the last 10 years, like when Loefah did "Horrorshow" and opened up this whole thing about really minimal half-step, and when Coki did "Haunted" or Skream did "Blipstream" and opened up the world of the wobble. I can even hear it with the first version of my track "Black Sun," and I'm constantly hearing that same droning, pitch-bent synth everywhere, and now with some, like, pitched-up helium vocals. And I don't dislike it necessarily, but it has nothing to do with me—it's just what happens. It's funny, you know, formulas aren't necessarily bad things, but it's interesting how they come out of certain tracks and spread about. And if you're not careful, you can consume too much and then you're not interested in it anymore.

**I know you have the one collaboration with Flying Lotus on the new album. Do you follow that sort of LA-centric so-called "beat scene" at all?**

A little bit. I love Flying Lotus' stuff. I loved his last album. I know most of the guys, and the people that are involved in it—all really cool people. It's not something that's big on my radar. I mean, I love the general vibe—it's growing and growing and has a lot of its own internal intricacy, but it has a sound, and you can kind of pinpoint that sound just like you can pinpoint certain styles of dubstep, so I don't follow every single release. The stuff that I always loved, coming out of LA, was the stuff with vocals. For me, that was more singular than the instrumental beats. Stuff like Sa-Ra, which was more in that tradition of fucked-up psychedelic R&B. Flying Lotus is slightly separate for me, especially his last album, which went so many different places and is compressed with so many ideas... You know, the idea of instrumental hip-hop, a bit like dubstep or instrumental grime, only appeals to me to a certain extent, but I don't think his album is instrumental hip-hop. Brainfeeder

is most interesting to me the more it deviates and spreads out from instrumental hip-hop.

**Did you ever have any interest in straight-up techno or house?**

Kind of, but not massively. I kind of worked this out in an interview the other day, because I've never been a huge house and techno fan, even though I've played quite a lot. And I've never been a huge hip-hop fan, even though I love a lot of hip-hop. Just thinking about the kind of DJing I've been doing for the past 20 years, it's always been suspended between house and hip-hop—house and techno on the one hand, and hip-hop [on the other]. Jungle and maybe 2-step and UK garage was like this perfect poised fusion between hip-hop and that broken or breakbeat culture on the one hand and house and techno on the other. So, grime, dubstep, UK funky, UK garage, jungle, hardcore... they've all been on this diagonal in between hip-hop culture on one hand, and house and techno on the other. And they've always been quite antagonistic cultures, whether it's because hip-hop is such a misogynist culture that thinks house and techno is gay, or whether house and techno has got its own—it doesn't want to listen to people's experiences and voices—it's got its own discriminations against hip-hop culture. Yeah, so I've never been so into either side, but this thing in the middle seems to be what I've been following musically.

**Since you hold such a respected position in the music scene, do you feel any extra pressure when you're releasing something? Do you feel like everything needs to be a definitive statement, or do you feel limited in your ability to just try things out because it has to come from the Kode9?**

No, not at all. I mean, the only limit is last year I think I started to lose the plot of it, where I didn't trust—I stopped trusting my own ability to say, "Fuck you, I'm putting this out because I like it." It's not that I stopped doing it, but I just started to question some of the stuff too much. But generally, if I like something enough, it's a bit of a fuck-you attitude. It's like, "I think this is great. I don't give a shit if you don't like it, because if you don't now, you will learn to like it."... The fact that there is no pressure is because we are in a nice position where people are quite open-minded about the label. But last year I did lose it.

**Do you feel like you've got it back, especially with your new album coming out?**

I'm really happy with the first few releases we're doing. The Morgan Zarate release I think is fantastic, and the Funkystepz release I think is really fantastic. And they are two new artists on the label who've come with something completely different from everything on the label, and I'm DJing with



"I don't think fragmentation itself is necessarily that interesting—it's the UK, everything is falling apart, and...?"

them, which I don't always do—with releases. I think last year was a lot of experimenting with how wide we could spread out. I have a feeling that this year is a bit more—I don't know what the word is—classic. Classic Hyperdub, as opposed to stretching out and seeing how wide we could go last year. I don't think we'll release as many singles this year; I think we'll try and keep it more focused.

**Thematically with your music, it seems like a lot of it touches on paranoia, existential dread, and a real sense of foreboding. Do you think those are still important themes for you to work with?**

I don't think they're that important in this album. To be honest, I think we exorcised the dread thing in the first track; we kind of deal with the first album on the first track of the new album. We deal with it with a lot more energy than we had on the first album. I don't think the album is particularly dreadful or paranoid or claustrophobic. I mean, it's certainly still set in a post-apocalyptic world, and it has a whole fiction surrounding it that you'll get when you see the artwork (there is a little graphic-novel kind of comic strip in the artwork that we're still working on). Me and Spaceape, we look back on that first album and we're like, "Fucking hell!" When I was talking to someone the other day, I was trying to look up the words for sleepwalking, like somnambulistic or something, and for us anyways it feels so catatonic. I pitched Spaceape's voice right down, and the rhythms are very linear, and I listen back on it, and think, "Wow." I don't how we got into that headspace to make music with that much weight on top of it. So we just didn't want to do something like that on the second album; we wanted it to have a bit more energy, and, I mean, it's not a carefree album by a longshot [*laughs*]—it's not jokey or frivolous or whatever. It still takes place in this post-apocalyptic world, but it's more surreal than it is dread. We wanted it to have more energy, feel more awake or more alert, and [have] more color. I didn't really use analog synths on the first album, and there are a lot of them on this album.

**What sort of outside factors inspired it? What kind of things were you looking to, or was there anything conscious?**

Going back to the Brainfeeder thing, when I met Flying Lotus, I was inspired by his music and Samiyam's, the way they use synths—totally. And that changed something in my ears, because dubstep was very grey at that point. That's the influence that that stuff has had on me—sidechained synths, breathing, really colorful synth melodies—particularly Samiyam and FlyLo. Not so much the beat thing, but their synths. But actually, nothing inspired the album, really. It's just like years of sweat and blood and interruption. I mean, you can ask Spaceape what inspired his lyrics, because he can tell you a lot about that. What inspired it musically is really just... you know, it's partly the fictional thing: We're trying to create a fictional world, and so you're like painting with sounds or trying to color in this imaginary world, so each track is like a different scene. Doing this graphic-novel thing with an artist friend of mine in New York, this guy Raz Mesinaï, the musician Badawi. So he's doing the mini-graphic novel for the album, and just working with him on that, it's almost like we're doing a storyboard to an invisible film that never gets past the storyboard phase. Just trying to put images to this stuff—that is a really interesting, and new process for us.

**What's the packaging going to look like?**

The packaging is done by our usual artist Manuel [Sepulveda, who designed this issue's cover].

**He runs Citinite.**

Yeah, which is an amazing label as well—really inspirational label. So the packaging looks like a Japanese woodblock; it's like a desert landscape with a huge, really vivid orange sun kind of refracted through these clouds so it comes out green through the clouds. This fictional world that the album takes place in is a world after an unclassified radioactive event, so it's not that the world is destroyed and dark like a wasteland—it's just that everything is a bit weird and glows in a strange way. And the atmosphere is a bit polluted and toxic, therefore the sun comes through in these weird colors—green sun, black sun. And the characters in this world react to this event in different ways, because the radioactivity makes people's bodies mutate, but there is a lot of people in the story who react badly to that and seek salvation in monotheistic religions, and we call them the Othermen. And then the other people in this story, I think we have more affinity with, take this synthetic substance called The Cure, which allows them to survive in this polluted atmosphere. So instead of seeking salvation in some Babylon-type place, the last line of the story is "they stay and remain to bathe under the black sun." The story came after the tracks; we wrote all the tracks and then were like, "What the fuck have we just done?" And then we were like, "That lyric resonates with that, and that with that," and then we built the whole story after in order to have a visualization of the art.

**And the idea of futurism, or exploring the future, it seems like the idea of your album is some sort of future...**

It's more implicit in this album and it was more explicit in the last album.

**Do you think the idea of futurism is still really worth pursuing? At what point has the future arrived?**

Now! [*laughs*] For me, of course it is, because all that means is being shocked by hearing something new, and that's the core of it—the shock of the new. I can't imagine not wanting to be shocked or surprised by new music. It's not like I listen to new music all the time; I often find myself looping around old albums that are my favorite. But you get into a holding pattern with your listening habits just because you're not hearing stuff that's taking you somewhere else. And obviously sometimes you get that shock from hearing something old that you've never heard before, but for me it's just about there being some change, and everything's not standing still. Because that's when you have to call in the straight jacket—when nothing is changing. There's this J.G. Ballard story called "The Day That Lasts Forever" in which the earth stops spinning and there is no night or day, the clock stops, everything stays the same. There's no night, so people find it hard to sleep and they stop dreaming and their awake life becomes a dream life, and becomes hallucinogenic. Anyway, that's all cool, but then I found this line that was great: the night never comes, but there is this character and she's like, "I feel the night coming in like a black sun on my face," which is great because it's the feeling of some kind of change.

## A FEW WORDS WITH THE SPACEAPE

**XLR8R: Tell me about your first meeting with Kode9... when and where did it take place?**

The Spaceape: I met Kode through a friend over 10 years ago. He used to DJ in South London as well as run the online journal that was Hyperdub back then. I used to go to some of the nights and hang out. It wasn't until we shared a flat together around 2002 that we began working together. It took quite a while before we actually recorded anything. Kode would always say, "I gotta get you on the mic and record something one day," but we were both busy doing our own things at the time. I remember one evening we were listening to music, chatting about tunes we liked, playing each other vinyl we had in our collections. Kode again suggested we record something. Back then I was writing short stories that were lyrical in their flow, but primarily I was a video artist running my own project called Uncoded. So, being a massive Prince fan—up to and not much beyond *Lovesexy* [*laughs*]—I picked up the *Sign "O" the Times* album and read the lyrics to "Sign o' the Times" in Jamaican patois over a low bass pulse. That one-take recording became "Sine of the Dub" (or "Sine"), and we've been working together ever since.

**Do you write all the lyrics for your collaborations with Kode9?**

With the exception of our first two releases, "Sine of the Dub" and "Spit," which were covers, I write all the lyrics for our collaborations. Initially, Kode used to give me a rhythm and I'd write something to it. However, now it's moved on. With this album, I'd write something and maybe record a vocal for Kode to make a beat for. Sometimes it would be the other way 'round. We also spent much more time in the studio together on this album, and I'd be on my laptop writing stuff whilst Kode was busy trying to get a drum sound or something.

**What sort of themes did you aim to explore with *Black Sun*?**

Well, I didn't know what I wanted to explore when I started writing for this album. But I knew I didn't want to cover things I'd written about on *Memories of the Future*. I began writing about things that either touched me or hurt me in some way, and as I was writing, and the stories moved further and further away from me, it became clear these stories inhabited the same world. A place that breathed a different atmosphere; had different rules; politics; desires; religions; even a different light to our own. We wanted to create an accelerated sonic fiction where elements of what we know still exist but are now either warped or fragmented. I wrote a "love song," "Promises"—it's about an illicit, destructive love that seems impossible but exists in the world created for it.



**Can you run through the genesis of a couple more of the tracks?**

One of things I tried to do was create characters, and through them we can navigate the new landscape. This is evident on tracks like "Neon Red Sign" and "Promises." In "Neon," I had the line "He saw a neon red sign today" in my head, which actually came from listening to The Beatles' "A Day in the Life," with the great opening line, "*I read the news today/Oh, boy!*" I write about a man on the run from prophets warning him about his future. "Otherman" started out as a short story about the uneasy relation between two tribes who love and loathe each other in equal measure. They are one and the same but can't see through the hatred and envy. It is one of the tracks on the album that has no chorus or obvious vocal hook. I rearranged it slightly, but it is still essentially how I originally wrote the story.

**How much of the lyric-writing process and song formation is informed by your live performances with Kode9?**

A lot of this album was born out of our live set. Our live set is very free and fast moving. There are no breaks in tracks—just one hour of continuous sounds. We curdle a lot of sounds together that can sound literally sick, but work for us. And lyrically, it's similar in that I freestyle more on stage and certain things that I think work, I bring to the studio and record. For example, towards the end of the opening track "Black Smoke," I repeat the refrain "I wonder seeing heavy black smoke ahead" over and over again. This came because I was doing it live and it added an intensity and a climax the track needed.

*Black Sun* is out in April on Hyperdub.  
hyperdub.net

[Read the complete Kode9 interview transcript at XLR8R.com/138extras.](#)



AMBIENT NOISEMAKER TIM HECKER PONDER'S SNOWY TUNDRAS  
AND M.I.T. EXPERIMENTS OF A BYGONE ERA.

# THE ICE STORM

WORDS: WALTER WASACZ PHOTOS: VINNA LAUDICO

## Quite possibly the last thing you'd expect Tim Hecker to admit to possessing is a "tropical soul."

Not only is he Canadian, but an artist best known for producing some of the most impressively glacial soundscapes just south of Thomas Köner's and Biosphere's arctic ambient masterworks. Hecker's most recent LP, *Ravedeath, 1972*, was recorded in a church in Reykjavik, Iceland, and earlier song titles include "Arctic Lover's Rock," "Boreal Kiss," and "Music for Tundra."

He was born in British Columbia before moving east to Quebec and, briefly, to Ontario. But his soul? Well, he says it's not where you might think it is. "I mean, people have said there is this 'Canadian-ness' in my music, but I don't think so," Hecker says via Skype from his home in Montreal, where it's cold and snowy on this January afternoon. "There is 'place' in the music I make, though I think it's minor. But then I've always been wishy-washy about geography."

Fair enough. After all, Hecker's second LP, *Radio Amor*, which he released on Germany's Mille Plateaux in 2003, was a shimmery meditation said to be based on a marine voyage he took off the coast of Honduras in the mid-1990s. And *Harmony in Ultraviolet*, which came three years later, contained beatless white-hot fuzz rock (seek "Spring Heeled Jack Flies Tonight") cranked to 11, and the gorgeous, warm-blooded oscillations of "Blood Rainbow" and its companion piece, "Rainbow Blood."

Hecker is all over the map, sonically speaking. And to try to nail him down on where he's going with it might be difficult. His

head is not an easy one to penetrate—and he admits that, too. "Sorry if I'm a little evasive. Hope I'm giving you enough to bite on," he says at one point. Don't misunderstand: He's not unpleasant, surly, or testy throughout an hour-long interview, and we're not wrestling over words. His resistance to probing comes straight out of Roland Barthes' "Death of the Author," critical theory that separates the creator from the created work. Barthes basically said the author's identity and other biographical details are inessential to judging the finished product. Hecker breaks it down this way: "Sometimes I'd just rather not know the people." He's referring to people like him, who make largely unclassifiable music channeled from some unknown source. "There are usually too many questions and not any real answers. I like to talk about it a little bit but prefer enigmatic discussion and bouncing off ideas."

And so be it and so we will. But first some obligatory biographical details need teasing out for newcomers to Hecker's unique sound art, which by turns is agitated and pastoral, and bears as much similarity to the productions of, say, Kevin Shields as it does to those of the patron saint of ambient, Brian Eno. Hecker comes from suburban Vancouver, and moved into the city in the early 1990s to attend the University of British Columbia. This period provided a musical awakening of sorts, exposing him to "spazz rock and electronics" as an undergrad (before that, as

a teen in the town of North Delta, he says he got turned on to bands like The Pixies and The Pogues in the late 1980s).

He moved east to do graduate work at Concordia and McGill universities, both in Montreal. Hecker's been there for the past 12 years, aside from a short time living in the Canadian capital, Ottawa. He's currently finishing up a Ph.D in the cultural history of sound at McGill. He arrived in Montreal just in time to join what was developing into arguably North America's richest—in terms of talent, that is—experimental techno scene as the century was about to turn. He began making dance tracks as Jetone, sent demos over to Force Inc. in Frankfurt, and had his debut full-length, *Ultramarine*, released in 2001. It was solid work, up there with the best and quirkiest jams of the day by people like Mikael Stavöstrand, Stewart Walker, Billy Dalessandro, Geoff White, and Yagya. His Jetone track "Bassblind Sunblind" was included in a Force Inc. comp called *Montreal Smoked Meat*, which featured other then-up-and-comers on the local scene like Akufen, Stephen Beaupré, Deadbeat, Jeff Milligan, and Mike Shannon.

"I had lots of friends who were producers and there was definitely a community, though I was bouncing between different scenes—rock, noise, metal—so I wasn't strictly a techno club kid," Hecker says of his early days in Montreal. "But I was listening to Mike Ink, Gas, Chain Reaction, and Warp. The city was very sympathetic, in terms of North



"People have said there is this 'Canadian-ness' in my music, but I don't think so."

American response to this kind of music. And MUTEK [which launched in 2000] played a big role in inspiring the scene."

Not content to only roll out beats, however abstract, Hecker found further inspiration on the digital cutting-room floor. More to the point: He began to work more closely with the sounds he used for interludes in his dance tracks. "I had a lot of material left over from *Ultramarine* that wasn't percussive that I wanted to explore," he says. "[The] Alien8 [label] is one of the few supporters of this music in Montreal. They became interested in what I was doing."

So much so that the leftfield imprint created a sub-label called Subtractif to release music that veered even further from the pulse of the club, but wasn't exactly wallpaper music, either. Artists like Mitchell Akiyama, Thomas Jirku, and Hecker all had music released by the label in 2001. Hecker's challenging *Haunt Me Haunt Me Do It Again* and *My Love is Rotten to the Core* EP were forerunners of all that came after: crackling melody, disembodied voices, drone distortion, and feedback mayhem.

The aforementioned *Radio Amor* hit at the perfect time—when Force Inc. Music Works' boutique sub-label Mille Plateaux was just at the end of a string of releases by some of the most radically innovative electronic musicians in the world: Frank Bretschneider, Vladislav Delay, Ekkehard Ehlers, Alva Noto, SND, Terre Thaemlitz, Gas, and Köner among them.

In 2004, Alien8 released Hecker's *Mirages*, and 2006's *Harmony in Ultraviolet* began his relationship with Kranky, which continued with *An Imaginary Country* in 2009 and *Ravedeath, 1972* this year. Listened to together, Hecker's body of work casts an evolutionary spell, rising and falling, crashing and colliding, then settling and soothing when you least expect it. Hecker (dare say, enigmatically) interprets what he does as "inhabiting the carcass of sacred music without providing a guarantee of the divine. It's not simple to decode, but—I hope—rewards with repeated listening."

He sees an evolution in his music over time, but to Hecker the changes are subtle, even as the sonic information has grown denser. He insists that "the palette is the same as before, the mood is the same."

Which leads us back to our "enigmatic discussion" of *Ravedeath, 1972*, which was conceived during a wintry period of incubation in Montreal, then executed on an endless midsummer Icelandic day in July of last year. Hecker says the original idea may have been to release a church organ performance as a fluid live piece, but that it became more interesting when the sounds were organized in a studio setting. The project was done with the assistance of Ben Frost, who performed on and helped engineer the record. Hecker himself played all instruments—including pipe organ, computer feedback loops, guitar, and pedals. Frost also played piano on the recording.

What he didn't want, and didn't get, is an LP that "returns to organic instrumentation," says Hecker. "Too often the narrative reads, 'experimental producer discovers real music' or something like that. This is definitely what I'm not into at all." He underscores the point by saying he "abhorred the whole folktronic movement," which is reassuring but not necessary. This music is too coiled up and ready to strike, and still too synthetic and futuristic to ever have the prefix "folk" attached to it.

And it sounds like it was all mastered to be heard ear-splittingly loud—in fact, all of Hecker's recorded output does, but the sub-bass rattle and hum, beginning with the wobbly overtones on the opening track, "The Piano Drop," approach evil-scary levels.

Intentional?

"Very much so. I'm obsessed with physical, ego-dissolving, pummeling music at maximum volume," Hecker says. When he talks about contemporaries he admires, he name-checks dirge rocker Stephen O'Malley over anyone remotely connected to the so-called ambient electronics scene.

But no, this is not a Sunn O))) record, even at its most fierce. After "The Piano Drop"—which refers to a photo of a group of MIT students pushing a piano off a roof in 1972, this album's cover image—only a few pieces keep up a steady bludgeoning: the last half of the three-part suite called "In the Fog," "Hatred of Music II," and "In the Air III," which features shredding guitar feedback and other effects for a little more than half the piece, before pretty, pouncing piano motifs guide the track into a more ethereal calming zone for "In the Air III."

*Ravedeath's* best track could be "Stereo Suicide, 1980," which indistinctly recalls My Bloody Valentine interludes on the band's *Loveless* LP, or the epic "Hatred of Music I," which combines the celestial majesty of the pipe organ filling up a sacred space with the raw power of undulating noise bringing it down back to earth.

Hecker has taken a keen interest in playing inside churches and cathedrals—one of his best gigs ever, he says, came at 2010's Unsound Festival in Poland, where he performed at Krakow's St. Katherine's Church. He performs live about 40 to 45 times a year, has made his studio his primary instrument (perhaps his one nod to Brian Eno, who did the same), and is on a decade-long streak of successfully producing intermittently harsh and strangely beautiful music that defies interpretation and still overwhelms. Hecker says simply, "I'm off the grid, I don't know if I'll ever get back on." Maybe that's all we need to know.

*Ravedeath, 1972* is out now on Kranky.  
sunblind.net



Listen to Tim Hecker's *XLR8R* podcast at  
[XLR8R.com/138extras](http://XLR8R.com/138extras).



# STRICTLY BALLROOM

AFTER DECADES IN THE SHADOW OF VOGUE DANCING AND CULTURE,  
**BALLROOM BEATS** COME TO THE FORE.

WORDS: MARKE B. PHOTOS: JOSH MCNEY





Step on edgier dancefloors nowadays, and you best be prepared to come a little cunt, honey. Dip, drop, duckwalk, catwalk, hands, hands, hands: vogue dancing and ballroom culture are experiencing another moment in the media spotlight.

This time, however, they're bringing the ballroom beats with them, beats that are finding their way into sets from DJs as different as Kingdom, Greg Wilson, Seth Troxler, and Nick Curly.

As a gay and transgender African American expressive form, modern ball culture has been around since at least the 1960s, transforming the necessarily underground gay tradition of meeting in rented ballrooms for private parties—gay bars and dressing in drag in public were illegal back then—into jawdropping spectacles of over-the-top gowns and performances. Over the years, the mainly New York City scene gradually developed an intricate system of drag-house families, themed ball events, status hierarchy (stars, statements, legends, icons), and style of fashion runway-mimicking battle dance, or voguing, all of which are still evolving as the culture has taken root in the Midwest, the South, and even Europe. Sometime in the mid 1980s, the gowns began to drop to the wayside, and the dancing, soundtracked by disco sounds from Cheryl Lynn's 1978 "Got to Be Real" to Maxtrack Orchestra's phenomenal 1988 "Love is the Message," took over the runway.

The ballroom scene experienced a mainstream breakout moment in the early '90s, when first

Malcolm McLaren's 1989 release "Deep in Vogue" climbed the dance charts and then Madonna's "Vogue" became a blockbuster pop hit. For many outside the scene, those two songs may be all they know of the sounds that accompanied the fierce chop 'n mop house battles taking place in Harlem and the Lower East Side at that time. Jennie Livingston's great 1990 documentary of vogue culture's golden age, *Paris is Burning*, stunted on musicology in favor of social commentary and sheer spectacle, and an avalanche of AIDS deaths obscured much of the vinyl lineage.

So it's no shock that the constantly advancing retro dance music machinery is lately unearthing gems from that short era, burnished as they are with mystery and glamor. The work of Danny and David Ian Xtravaganza, Jose & Luis, Robbie Tronco, and Frankie Fuentes and specific vogue-oriented tracks by Armand Van Helden, Robbie Rivera, Junior Vasquez, and Danny Tenaglia are all finding new lives through re-edited versions or straight-up '90s dancefloor revivalism. Recent high-profile releases like Kim Ann Foxman's "Creature" and Butch's "No Worries" tap into the old-school vogue vibe in their own ways, and the forthcoming "Relax Relate Release" by Charles

McCloud on the Abducted label presents the novelty of a straight, white gangster-rap producer emulating the old-school vogue sound he adores, with a futuristic twist. (It's actually quite nice, as it turns out.)

But that golden ballroom moment was 20 years ago. Vogue culture has changed. It's riding a new wave of exposure, through thousands of fan-posted YouTube videos, the massive viral reception that accompanied the five-member Vogue Evolution team's televised run on *America's Best Dance Crew* in 2009, and Willow Smith's "Whip My Hair" video, which features Leiomy of Vogue Evolution and centers on her signature "Leiomy Lolly" hair-whip dance move, also co-opted by Britney Spears and Beyoncé. Looser, less formal groups of young voguers called kiki houses are springing up alongside the established houses. A more aggressive style of voguing has taken over, as "vogue fem" (or "vogue femme") continues to dominate the floor. And a new generation of DJs and musicians is doing the once-unthinkable—making new ballroom beats.

In the late '90s, a different way of voguing began to come up. Like most styles of dance, vogue fem is more about a look and feel than a hard-and-



"It's definitely all about the Ha. When I heard that track, I knew

what I wanted to do."

— DJ MikeQ

fast set of rules. It can encompass ultra-feminine, ballet-like "soft and cunty" movements on the one end, and hyperactive, stunt-driven "dramatics" on the other. Wild hair tosses, heart-stopping drops, and angled twirls became the vogue fem hallmarks, however. With the new style, dancers began to gravitate towards nervier, more anxious music with sharp orchestra hits, cascades of percussive crashes, and super-choppy samples. The gracefulness and glamorous poses of the Old Way made room for more attention-grabbing moves, and the amped-up speed garage sound of the new tracks wouldn't feel out of place on contemporary dance labels like Night Slugs or Fool's Gold.

Kevin Aviance's maximalist 1995 club song "Cunty" became the explicit anthem for this style, and "cunty" became its highest praise. But the true musical rock on which vogue fem was built is the 1991 Masters at Work track "The Ha Dance." As a house release, "The Ha Dance" sounded pretty hard-driving for its time, relentlessly looping and manipulating a short sample from the movie *Trading Places* until it was transformed into a heckling metallic squiggle. With its bouncing crashes and staccato bass, it was perfect for the new style. And its elements could easily be reconfigured and combined with other samples to create even more vogue fem tracks, an endlessly replicating Ha that drops the queens to the floor.

"Oh, it's definitely all about the Ha," says 25-year-old New Jersey-based DJ MikeQ, one of the three biggest DJs making ballroom beats today. "When I heard that track, I knew what I wanted to do." Like Atlanta's Legendary DJ Angel X and the new sound's originator, Washington, DC's Vjuan Allure, MikeQ spins a variety of different music, but is primarily known for his vogue fem style. Also like them, he sells dozens of self-produced tracks through his extensively developed website, and heavily brands each one with his audio tag.

Now a member of the House of Ebony, MikeQ went to his first ball at the Globe rental hall in downtown Newark in 2003, and made his first track a year later. (He started out with an Akai MPC1000, but currently uses a variety of sound programs and a "voice changing box.") His Qween Beats Productions company is a revolving collaboration between himself and various vogue MCs, known as commentators. As for his musical style, his quiet, reserved manner in interviews belies an artful canniness that makes room for a wicked sense of humor: His recent hit, "I Whip My Ha," closes the Willow Smith-Masters at Work vogue loop, and the just-released "Maurica" jumped on a comedy routine internet meme almost before it materialized.

Down in DC, Vjuan Allure, of the Nannie Trax label, is busy combining classic flair with future Ha. His "Come On and Get You Some More" from 2007 is a nod to First Choice's "Let No Man Put Asunder" from 1983, while barnstormer

"The Essicasy Ha" draws not just from "The Ha Dance," but George Kranz's 1983 staple "Din Daa Daa" and acid house. That easy rapport with the past is rooted in his experience—he's been clubbing since he was 11 years old, and helped bring voguing to Italy when he was an exchange student in Naples.

"What it comes down to, is that whereas before there were a number of songs to play for the dancers, when vogue fem started getting popular there were only about six that really worked," Vjuan tells me. "It was frustrating because I hate to repeat songs. So I became the first DJ to start making original tracks in that style. It just wasn't done at the time."

Dance music historians may not be surprised that there's a connection to the Motor City. "I was asked to spin in Detroit at the Post Bar, Eric Christian Bizarre was commentating a ball there," Vjuan says. "This was around 2000. I had brought all this music, and I was playing it—and in New York or DC they would have been dancing, but in Detroit they were not. They were just standing there... until I dropped the Ha. Then every kid in the building jumped up. And I was like, 'You have got to be kidding me.' And I got mad, because I had been told to bring things like 'Love Hangover'—very basic things. I got mad, and I went home, and I started to create the first remix. Something just drove me to it.

"I used the Ha for my first track because I knew that that's what they wanted to hear—because of vogue fem, everyone wanted the crash. So I gave them the crash but I changed the beat—I actually made it more dramatic. It was my own creation."

Still, despite previewing snatches of them in his sets, Vjuan felt "really scared" to play his own tracks, feeding them instead to his mentor DJ Sedrick, Legendary District House Mother of DC and beloved anchor of the East Coast gay black house scene. According to Vjuan, word "spread like wildfire that there were new dramatic beats being played—but still I wasn't ready to step forward."

Finally, he was forced to take ownership at another Detroit ball, this one hosted by House of Rodeo. "It was very, very hot in the venue and Goddess Rodeo had these huge fans going. The commentator, Jack Mizrahi, hadn't shown up yet, and this was hours into it. I was going to run out of music. So I thought, 'It's now or never,' and went into a whole Vjuan Allure set. And the place just went nuts. So that's how I knew."

Vjuan prefers his tracks to come fast and physical, an urge cemented by his status in the House of Allure. "I have my Simian sampler workstation, my Kawai drum machine, and some sequencers, which is how I prefer to work. I can knock out a track in 15 minutes. With a computer you'll spend 20 minutes just doing one part. It's a hassle. I like to hit that trigger, to get that timing with the cue buttons and



really feel the rhythm. What you hear me doing live when I'm out, I'm actually doing live.

"One of the things that sets me apart from every other DJ who makes music is that I'm the only one who walks. I vogue. I walk Old Way, that's my category. It's natural for me, and the energy for me to dance, period, has to be high. So my tracks come out that way, not matter what kind of tracks I'm giving you—vogue fem, face tracks, Old Way songs, legends, statements, and stars songs. The energy is always high, high, high."

If MikeQ comes off as smart yet shy, and Vjuan Allure as outspoken and motherly, then Legendary DJ Angel X is the bad-boy lover of the three. When I ask him why he moved down to Atlanta from his native Brooklyn, he immediately says, "The boys. I personally love the black guys, and this is where the hottest ones are."

Angel X belongs to one of the most storied New York-based houses, Xtravaganza, but he came down south a few years ago at the request of icon Andre Mizrahi to help him out on balls. The Atlanta scene keeps him as busy as the other two DJs, with gigs almost every night of the week, about 30 percent of them ball-related. He's been making beats since 2003, following in the footsteps of Vjuan Allure, and he got his start as a DJ at the fabled Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village when he was 16.

Angel X's Aunt Naomi introduced him to house music as a baby—"No matter what I play, I always return to the house," he says—but his productions, made mostly on Fruity Loops, evidence a wide-ranging ear. His breakthrough was a breathless cross-pollination of "The Ha Dance" and the theme from the *X-Men* animated TV series of the '90s. Newer tracks, however, draw from Detroit techno, Baltimore club music, and more global sounds. "I like to play with whatever catches my ear, then come back to it over a couple months' time when I have something to add," he says. "Often I don't know what spirit got into me." (His restless ear could be symptomatic of a restless spirit; he told me he sometimes finds the ball scene "corny" after all this time and wants more gigs at "regular" gay house parties.)

Besides moving the music forward, Angel X is emblematic of the spread of ballroom culture. While many of the new wave of Ha makers—Brooklyn's Divoli S'vere, New Jersey's DJ Rico—still hail from vogue's original locus, others, like Shariff and Kevin JZ Prodigy from Philadelphia, Houston's B. Ames, and the Bamabounce collective from Birmingham, Alabama, enlarge the geographic perspective. Vjuan, Angel, and MikeQ travel around the region constantly, and have yet to notice any specific regional vogue dance or musical style.

"With the technology, you don't have that kind of differentiation," says Vjuan. "Once someone does something new, everybody can see it or hear it. That's the great thing, even though it leads to a lot of copying. Everyone can know about your ball now—where it is, how much it is. And anyone is welcome to come to a function. You'll have to put up with a whole lot of gay kids, but you can come.

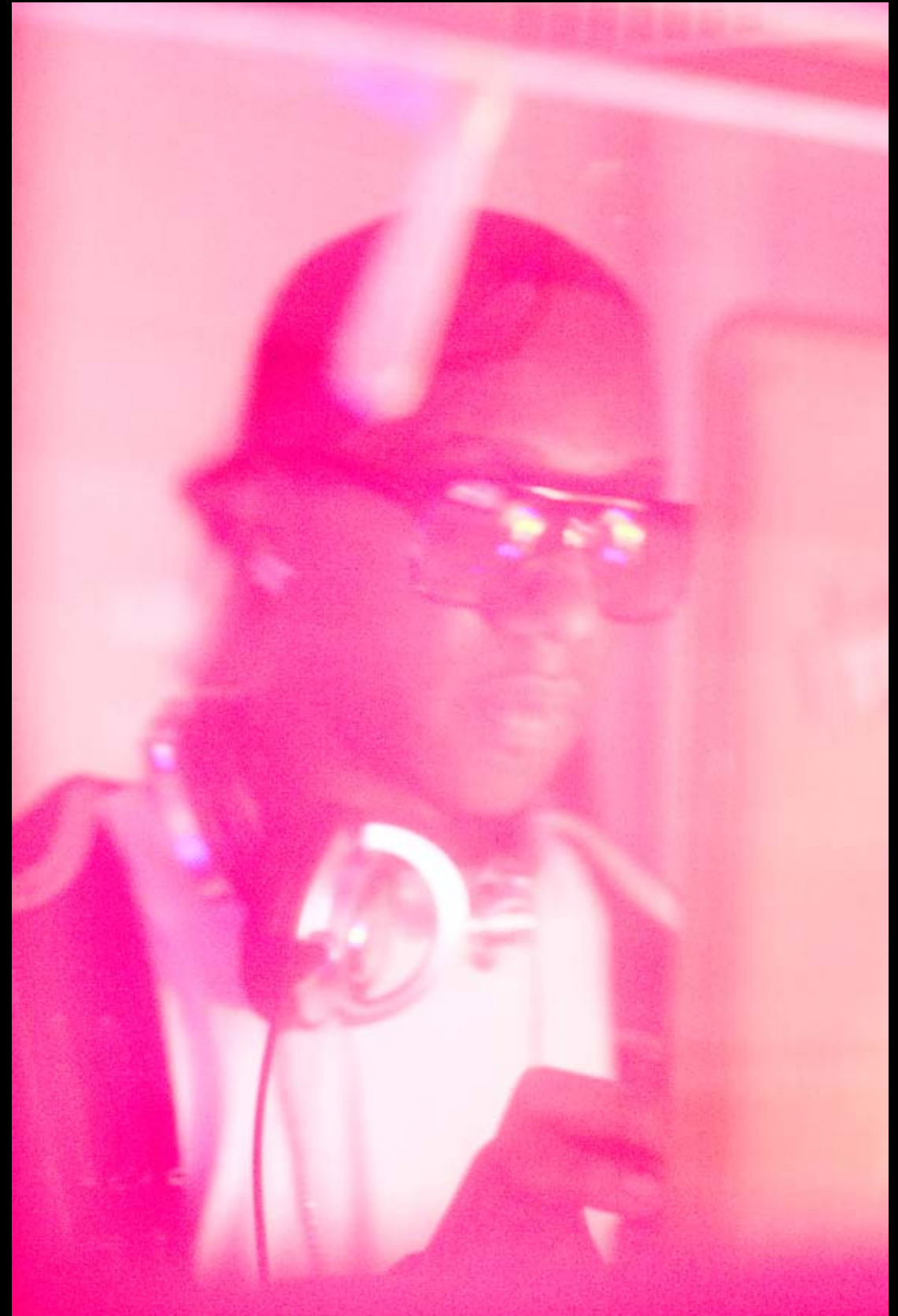
"What I do worry about is things getting watered down," he admits. "People coming in and thinking they can throw a ball when they've never even been to a ball. I don't ever want to lose the original creativity, the spirit that's been passed down. Once the creativity's diminished, that's the downfall."

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vjuanallure.com,  
djangelx.com,  
djmikeq.com



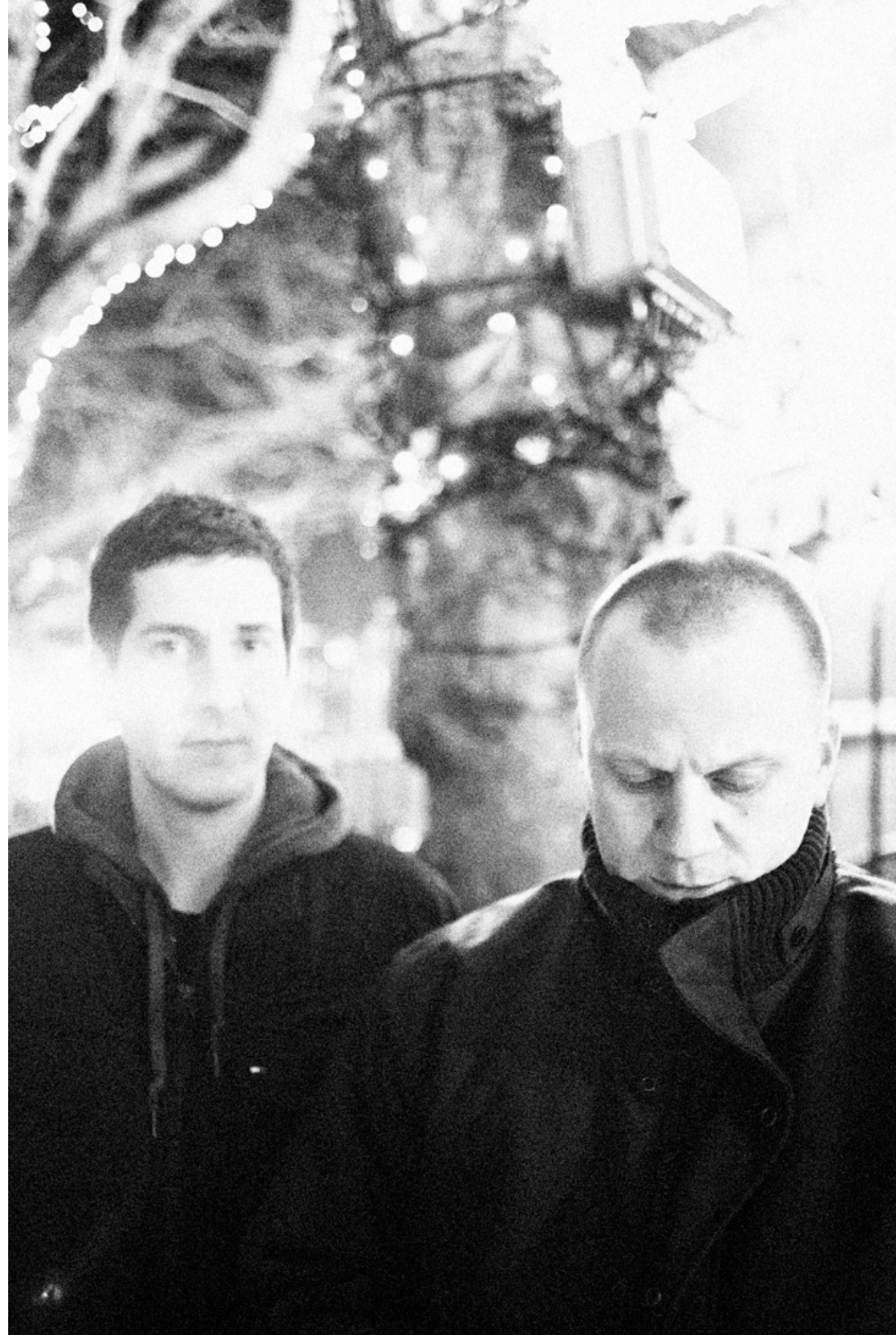
Check out Jennie Livingston's  
*Paris Is Burning* and DJ MikeQ's  
exclusive podcast at [XLR8R.com/138extras](http://XLR8R.com/138extras).



TWO VIDEO-STORE REFUGEES REFRESH UK BASS WITH VINTAGE  
GEAR AND STRIPPED-DOWN RHYTHMS.

# M ENTAL-B REAKDOWN

WORDS: TOMAS A. PALERMO PHOTOS: BEN RAYNER



They spent years watching *Aliens*, *Akira*, *Blade Runner*, and *Tron* movies in the video shop, and hundreds of nights out exploring hardcore and jungle warehouse raves. Then there were countless days surviving England's bitterly cold weather and absorbing sunny '80s synth pop.



Maybe it was buying their first studio gear or meeting drum & bass innovator Darren "dBridge" White at London club The End that fueled their dreams. These moments and a million others forged Alex Green and Damon Kirkham's friendship, and led the duo to form Instra:Mental and define a new path for UK bass music.

Kirkham and Green's collaboration has lasted since their initial meeting at age 11 and culminated in multiple British music awards, a thriving label, and the massively popular Autonomic podcast series. Although initially aligned with the drum & bass circuit, Kirkham and Green's current output isn't locked in to a specific speed or cadence. Instra:Mental's music is defined by edgy, stripped-down rhythms that leave space for rich, synthesizer-saturated melodies. "We don't like to sit still on a tempo or an idea. We're [always] evolving through new techniques and rhythms," says Green. *Resolution 653*, Instra:Mental's forthcoming debut album on the duo's NonPlus+ label, unites electro, drum & bass, Detroit techno, and other electronic offshoots on tracks that blend 1980s influences with high-tech refinement. The album offers songs like "When I Dip," an ardent electro workout that sounds like Newcleus retooled for the Dirty South era with machine-gun claps, Moog-y bass patterns, and rap vocal snippets, while techno-dubstep hybrid "Thomp" features swiveling, stomping rhythms that sound like they should be blasting from a Rio favela. It all comes after a six-year break from producing, and they've virtually abandoned drum & bass.

## "Growing up in that time with wonky VHS tapes had a lot to do with the cinematic style of the Instra:Mental sound."

After early years absorbing hip-hop, jungle, and rave culture and listening to everything from N.W.A. and Autechre to Optical and Drexciya, Kirkham and Green rented studio time to record drum & bass tracks and eventually bought synths and computers. A solo effort and two split singles with Source Direct on the Demonic label in 2000 did well enough that money started coming in. But quick fame led to stagnancy and life caught up with the pair. They retreated from music until 2007, when they released "Comanche" followed by "Rogue" b/w "Sakura" on Darkestral Recordings. "We re-entered the scene with the tracks 'Comanche' and 'Naked Zoo,'" recalls Kirkham. "We were pushing something new and refreshing into the drum & bass scene." Another single, "The Chamber," was also widely lauded despite, according to Green, being "to the left of what everyone else was doing."

Things moved quickly after that: By 2009 they linked with dBridge for releases on his Exit label, founded the NonPlus+ imprint, and started the Autonomic podcast series. A high point came in '09 when they released the moody, minimal vocal D&B tune "Watching You" on NonPlus+. "The track came together really naturally," says Kirkham. "Everything just slipped into place." The song was mostly written on a classic Yamaha DX-7 synth and features dBridge's vocals processed with Kirkham's custom Reaktor patch.

Just as fans and the press were praising Instra:Mental's complex, stripped-down drum & bass, the duo changed direction again. "I was struggling to write interesting beat patterns at 170 [beats per minute]," explains Green. "I was spending hours in a session and not feeling satisfied. As soon as we slowed the tempo down, things started coming together more easily." Kirkham echoes the sentiment, adding that some patterns and grooves worked better at slower speeds. "You just roll with whatever feels right," he says.

Instra:Mental's music is cemented by a precise balance of vintage and future studio technology. Working out of a studio dubbed The Zoo, Green and Kirkham still use the original gear they bought as teens with added high-end dynamic hardware and various synths. "We're always buying and selling different equipment," says Green. "It's fun for us to get new toys; it instantly inspires us." But, Kirkham explains, the duo isn't about to reveal all their production cards. "We've always been quite secretive about our set-up. We're always trying to create fresh sounds and processes," he says.

Their studio innovations are heard on techy tracks like "Tramma" or the electro-fitted "Leave It All Behind" on Apple Pips, whose tense, minimal beats recall Photek's or Source Direct's sparse production, minus the drum & bass meter. Stepping

further leftfield, "Futurist" has a Mark Pritchard-style broken-beat feel. For these tunes, Kirkham and Green rely on vintage techno drum-machine rhythms and pads that hint at '80s synth icon Vangelis. Also trading on the retro influence, the title of their collaborative track with dBridge, "Blush Response," references Vangelis' composition from the *Blade Runner* soundtrack.

"I grew up in a video shop," explains Kirkham. "My mum owned it and I helped run it with her. Alex and I both used to watch all the films before they hit the shelves. Growing up in that time with wonky VHS tapes had a lot to do with the cinematic style of the Instra:Mental sound." Green has a similar fondness for his '80s upbringing. "Watching the films and hearing the synthesized pop music and film scores from that period made me who I am," he says.

The same retro/future mix is heard in the duo's incredibly successful Autonomic podcast series, which features significant electronic artists from the past alongside edgy new and unreleased tracks by friends and collaborators like dBridge, ASC, and Vaccine. The podcast's success also led to Instra:Mental and dBridge being invited to mix *FabricLive 50*.

Although Green and Kirkham's main focus now is promoting *Resolution 653*, the two compound their already hectic schedules with multiple side-projects, aliases, and A&R work for their label. Green solos as Al Bleek and Boddika while Kirkham moonlights as Kid Drama and other monikers that he won't reveal. They run NonPlus+, a label now 10 deep in singles by ASC, Vaccine, and Jimmy Edgar, with new titles by Actress, Skream, and Lotek on the horizon this year. Instra:Mental also releases tracks for other imprints like Paulo Pereira's Naked Lunch label or Loefah's Swamp81, and have an upcoming single for producer Martyn's 3024 imprint. The boys will explore solo releases this year, as Green's Boddika has six tracks committed to Swamp81 and a 12" for Naked Lunch with more material forthcoming on NonPlus+ and Hotflush.

And who knows, they might even return to their drum & bass roots soon. "I have some really interesting ideas for new beat patterns at 170 bpm now," says Green. "We may have to give them a whirl some day." He adds that like most great studio collaborations, his and Kirkham's music mostly happens spontaneously. "It was never a case of 'Will this work on the dancefloor?' or 'Who's gonna like this?'" Green explains. "The music we've written, we've written because we wanted to, and most importantly because *we* liked it."

*Resolution 653* is out in April on NonPlus+. [myspace.com/instrumentaluk](http://myspace.com/instrumentaluk)



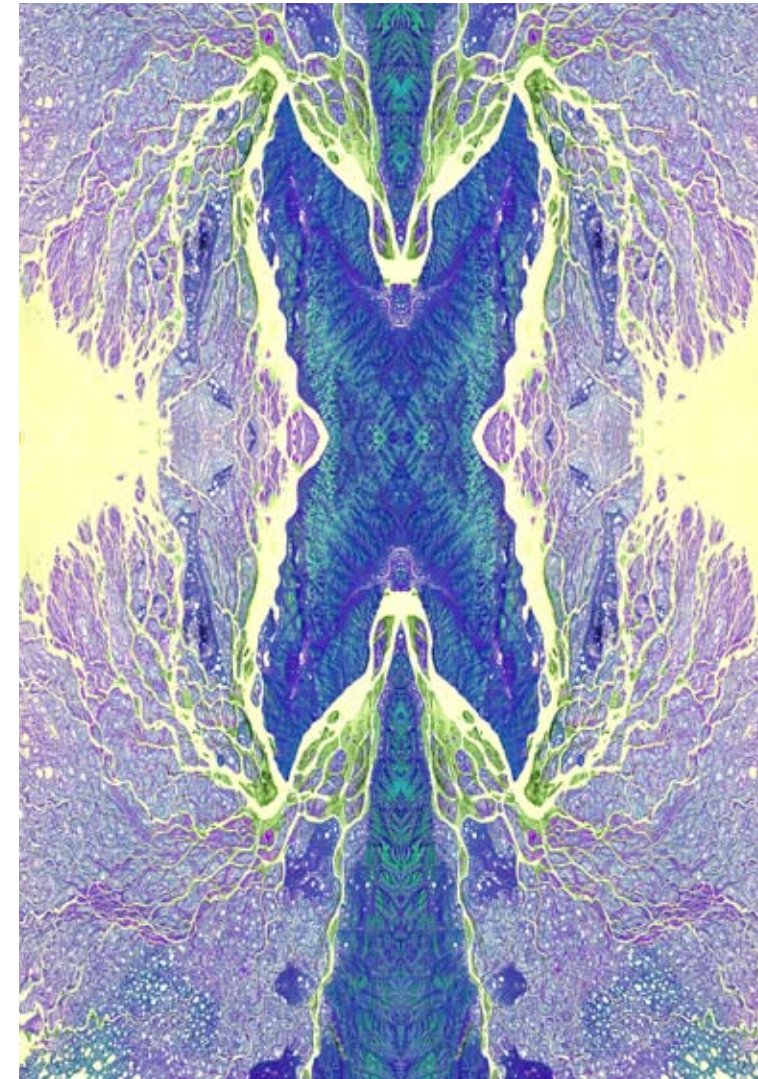
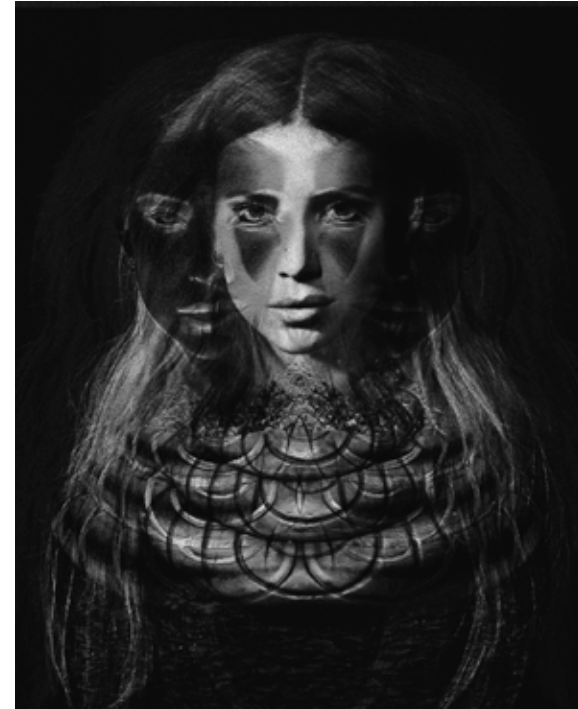


WORDS: JOSIAH HUGHES

## FORBIDDEN KINGDOM

A LOOK AT THE MYSTICAL, SPIRITUAL, AND SYMMETRICAL WORK OF MELBOURNE-BASED COVER ARTIST LEIF PODHAJSKY

Obsessed with symmetry and geometric shapes, Melbourne-based artist Leif Podhajsky is attempting to harmonize the universe one piece at a time.



Whether he's colliding nature with space or exploring the human body through photo experiments, Podhajsky's multi-disciplined output resembles an encyclopedia of the metaphysical. He also has the precise artistic skill set to be a master at the dying medium of album art. There's no greater evidence than the striking visuals he provided for Tame Impala's *Innerspeaker* and Lykke Li's *Wounded Rhymes*, both of which possess the depth and detail of dusty '70s LP covers. Here, Podhajsky tells us about his equal love of Krautrock and magic.

**XLR8R: What does a day in your life look like?**

Leif Podhajsky: I usually get up sometime around 9:30, shower and make a coffee, feed the cat, then hopefully sit in the sun for a while. I have just moved into a new home studio after having one in the city for a few years, so I don't have to go very far to begin creating. I check my email and see if there's anything that will stress me out for the day—this can take a while. I usually make breakfast quite late and then begin working on whatever project I have going on. If I have no projects, I will usually continue working on a number of art pieces that I work on simultaneously. This pretty much takes up my day until late at night. I have been travelling quite a bit for work and play lately, which has been a new element in the mix and a really nice change to my usual routine.

**Is there a central theme running through all of your work?**

There are definitely certain themes that reiterate throughout my work, such as the importance of nature as both a source of balance and harmony in our lives... issues with our delusion and devaluation of time, and our stubbornness in appreciating a single moment as beautiful. I am also am very interested in exploring altered or higher states of awareness and the knowledge and wisdom I think we can attain from these places. There are a lot of different themes and ideas which I like to delve into, but I guess it comes down to love, knowledge, and answers as how to be happy and content.

PREVIOUS PAGE:  
COAGULATED PHYSIQUE

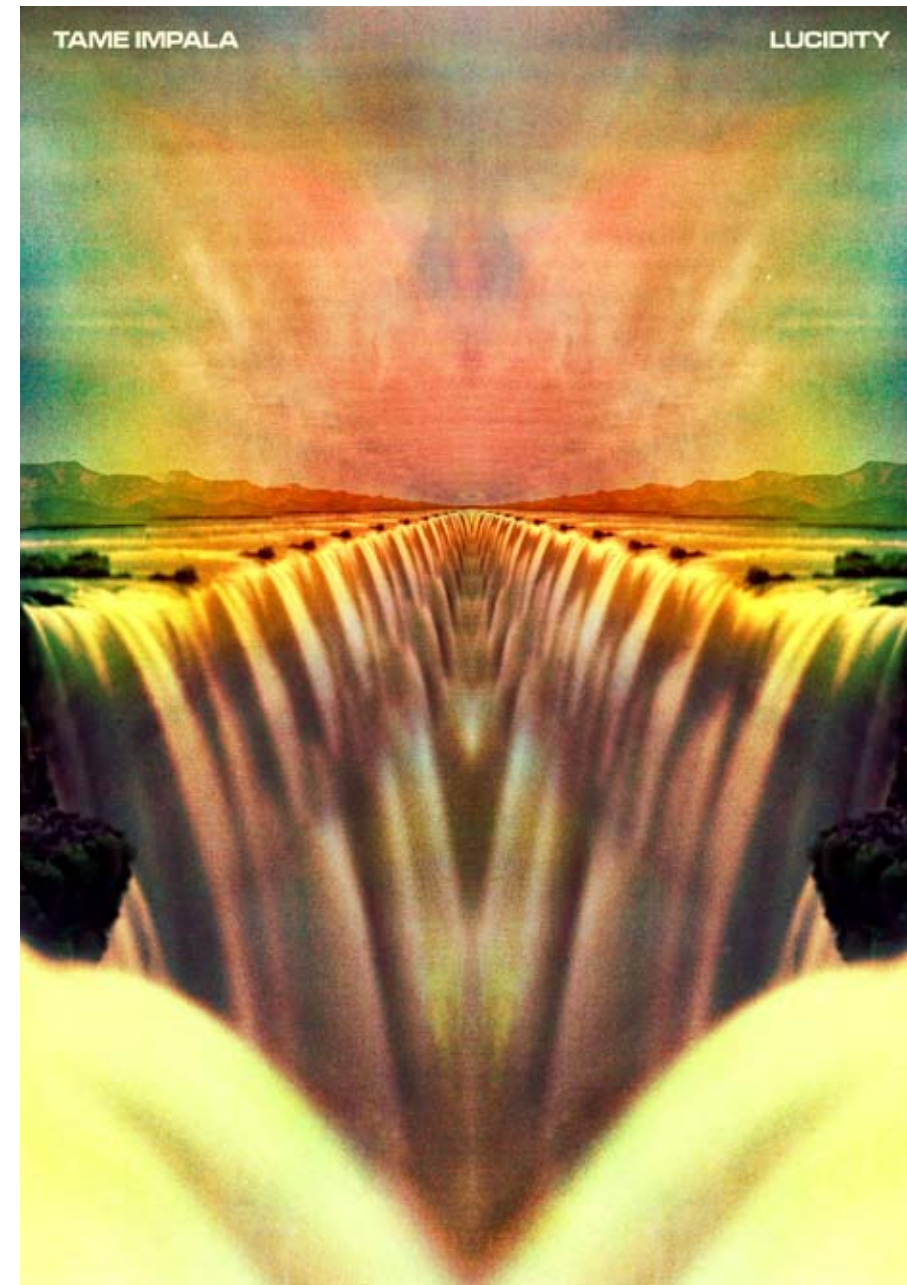
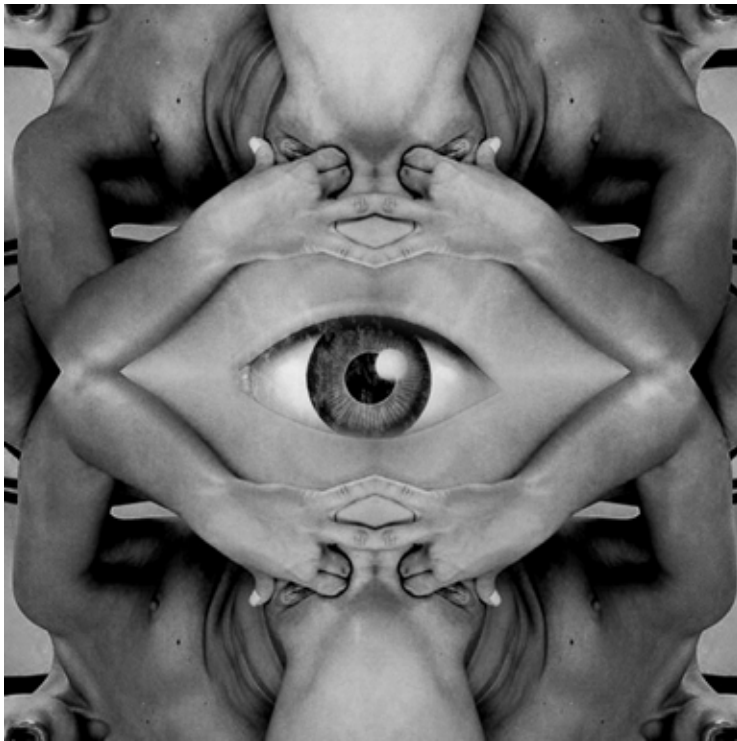
LEFT:  
LYKKE LI WOUNDED RHYMES  
LIMITED-EDITION POSTER.

MIDDLE:  
DMT TIME

RIGHT:  
WANDERER INSIDE THE SEA  
OF TIME; JUNGLE WIZARD







LEFT:  
COAGULATED PHYSIQUE

RIGHT:  
TAME IMPALA INNERSPEAKER  
ALBUM COVER

LEFT:  
TAME IMPALA LUCIDITY  
POSTER

ABOVE:  
OTHERWORLD

**Are there specific rules or guidelines for how you create your pieces? And do you ever break those rules?**

The only guideline for me is to try and reflect, in the best way I can, the concept or idea I wish to examine. Sometimes I have this concept before I start a piece, and other times it's organic and develops with the work I am creating. I believe breaking rules is the best way to go forward and learn new things, but I guess when it comes to more graphic-design-related projects, I like to stick to clean and simple lines and a more traditional approach.

**How do you start a piece? How do you know when it's finished?**

I usually start with an idea or concept, which I either sketch, write down, or preserve in my head. Then I begin an extensive search for images, photos, cut-outs, textures, anything which I think may help form the idea. I have a large image library to draw from, and am forever collecting and adding to this bank. Then comes the hard part: actually making the first mark. This is all about getting into the right headspace. For me, I use music as a way of submerging myself, letting go of the idea enough to explore the possibilities without a preconceived notion of how it should turn out. Sometimes this comes easy; other times, it's much harder to find. The mistakes I make often lead me in new directions toward a finished piece. Knowing when it's finished also can be difficult. This is actually

my favorite part of a piece of work, adjusting colors and contrast, getting it perfect. This is when I sit back a little and get a buzz on what I have made, but sometimes you can overdo it and have to realize when no more tinkering is needed.

**Do you ever feel like you don't have any ideas?**

Quite the opposite—I feel I have almost too many ideas and different things I wish to explore. I am really interested in doing some sculptural stuff this year, and have been dabbling in some motion projects also. So I like to mix it up and always push myself to new levels. If I get a little stuck, doing something removed from what I am working on can help to clear the mind and let new ideas in. I think travel is one of the best tools for getting inspiration.

**When you make album art, is the process different than making your other work? Are you given guidelines from the artist?**

Definitely with album art there is usually a brief and time constraints, but I use a lot of the same approaches across both commissioned and personal works. Developing creative ideas and communicating this idea visually, typographically, or however it is, in a way which engages its audience whilst always attempting to push boundaries and, of course, with commissioned work, please both musicians and record labels. So the difference may be in the concept or brief, and therefore subject to different creative outcomes.

But this is part of why I love giving visual identity to music—you have to engage with the artist and the sound and create something which reflects both their vision and yours. I have been lucky to work with some great artists so far, where I think we have really got the balance perfect.

**What is your favorite album cover?**

I have always been interested in album art and this fusion I talked about above, so it's hard to narrow it down to just one. I recently did an article for Modular for my top five album covers and I gave them 12 after much deliberation. I love Storm Thorgerson, Peter Saville, and Mati Klarwein, plus an array of unknown artists that created covers for Can, Beefheart... and the keyboardist from Black Mountain [Jeremy Schmidt] does some exquisite work for their releases. But I would have to say [my favorite is] the cover by Ron Raffaelli for the self-titled Free album, which features the silhouette of a woman made of stars, leaping across the sky, with beautifully restrained typography reading "Free." It gives the cover a floating, dream-like quality. And this shit was way before Photoshop came into play.

**What artists inspire you?**

There's really too many to list: Egon Shiele, Dali, Remedios Varo, Maurizio Cattelan, Bas Jan Ader, Augustin Lesage, Rudolf Steiner, Goethe, Alex Grey, Gustav Klimt, Escher, Jonathan Zawada, Neil Krug, friends and family.

**What music do you listen to while you work?**

I just finished two mixtape [covers]—one with my good friend Isaac from the band Young Magic, which has a lot of stuff I have been listening to lately, a lot of Afrobeat, early Nigerian and Ghanaian, Turkish pop/psych like Mustafa Özkent and Selda. But I also have been loving stuff from Teebs, Dunian, Yuk, and Shigeto, so it's a mixed bag. The second mixtape is a Krautrock, psych, and progressive collection. I think part of why I like doing these is I get free reign over creating the album art, which is really fun.

**What are your goals when you make art?**

Personally, I am looking for answers and knowledge, and making art helps me identify and develop certain aspects of my life I think need modifying, balancing, or changing. I like to always be pushing the boundaries of what I thought I could achieve and gain new ways of seeing things, and then after this, putting my work to an audience to see how others identify with what I have created is always a humbling and beautiful experience.

**There is a certain mysticism and sense of spirituality in your work. Does that reflect any of your own personal beliefs or is it more of a visual aesthetic that you're drawn to?**

It definitely reflects certain spiritual or mystic ideas I wish to explore. I believe the world is going through a huge shift at the moment, and for me, my work reflects both a personal change and a change I think that needs to take place in society. I guess the aesthetic reflects the themes I am looking at. I use a lot of balance, recursion, and symmetrical techniques, which reflect the themes we talked about in the first question, like nature, time, magic, love, and the importance of living in the moment.

Check out more of Podhajsky's work online at [XLR8R.com/138extras](http://XLR8R.com/138extras).



# Warp Records



## Bibio Mind Bokeh

CD / LP / Digital  
Out March 29

"Bibio combines abstract IDM, folk and experimental hip-hop beatmaking... enveloped in a lo-fi hum that creates a warmth around his sounds without distorting them."  
- Prefix



## Autechre EPs 1991 - 2002

5 CD Box Made in the Designers Republic / Digital  
Out April 12

"By maintaining a ferocious appetite for streaming across territory few electronic musicians possess even a perception of, Autechre continue to test themselves and listeners alike with stunningly intricate results."  
- BBC



## Prefuse 73 The Only She Chapters

CD / LP / Digital  
Out April 26

"The Prefuse 73 discography is united by Herren's skill with melody, the warm glue binding his fractured rhythm and noise together"  
- Pitchfork

03/11

## Album Reviews



### James Blake

*James Blake*

Atlas



DUBSTEP'S GREAT WHITE HYPE MOVES TOWARD POP AND OVERREACHES ON HIS DEBUT ALBUM.

The buzz about James Blake has been building for well over a year via a series of well-received *post-post-dubstep* releases on au courant imprints Hemlock, Hessel Audio, and R&S. A professional association with Mount Kimbie, the experimental bass duo with whom he shares some noble qualities—a nerdy-but-cool bravura, pioneering spirit, and youthful ambition—has also aided in his ascent.

Hype for Blake's self-titled debut full-length accelerated in late 2010 with the release of Blake's cover of Feist's "Limit to Your Love," which charted briefly in the UK. Then, thanks largely to sympathetic critical attention for his initial creative spurt and a growing and increasingly devoted fan base, Blake finished second in the BBC Sound of 2011 poll. At 21, tags like "musical genius" were being tossed around before his career was able to fully set into a solid foundation. That's not his fault, but pitching expectations too high seldom helps anyone in this business.

At first glance, instrumentally, and in terms of its production values, *James Blake* (the LP) sounds not unlike the James Blake we've come to expect. The quirky time signatures that take their cues from urban sources (hip-hop and grime) remain. Chopped-up rhythms and the occasional fat synth twist and tease, before disappearing and leaving only Blake's voice to bear the weight. It's a risky decision to develop the project essentially as a cycle of ballads, rebranding the artist as a personality rather than a producer.

That's a tough sell—a trap, really—one that more seasoned bass artists like Kode9 and Shackleton wisely avoid at all costs. With some music, the fewer windows into the soul, the better. The self can stand in the way of expressing the art, and so it does here.

Having said that, Blake's voice, which on earlier

recordings was smartly cut, edited, and altered with cleverly rendered effects, has impressive range. Other reviewers evoke names like David Sylvian, Antony Hegarty, and Jamie Lidell, and they're not far off. Let's add another: Mark Hollis, the former Talk Talk vocalist whose somber 1998 self-titled LP was a brilliant final statement of withdrawal from the fast lane of 1980s synth-pop.

But Blake's voice and poetry strain to take us anywhere we haven't already been with more experienced inner-space travelers at the helm. Furthermore, his music has become inexplicably ponderous and static, at times seeming to stop dead in its tracks and not move forward at all.

The saving graces are few. Blake takes what was, to borrow a cutting phrase from Julian Cope, "MOR slop," and remakes "Limit to Your Love" into a dark, dirge-like melodrama that seems to fit him hand in glove. He gives it a slow swing using stark piano, some bass wobble and hum, and a funereal drum beat. It's edgy and good. On "I Mind," Blake sneaks in tropical bass and drum patterns that help turn a moribund mood at the song's beginning into a near-celebration as it begins to fade. "Measurements" and "Unluck" more than hint at Blake's interest in gospel and soul, though there is something missing here, too. Call it authenticity, or real passion. Call it out for what it is: The kind of genuine detail that is nailed in hundreds of African-American churches every Sunday.

The best track is the haunting "The Wilhelm Scream," which features Blake at his lyrical best: "I don't know about my dreams/I don't know about my love/All that I know is that I'm fallin, fallin, fallin, fallin." It's also got a sonic charge to it that fails to materialize on any other song on the LP, giving us that physical and emotional kick in the head we've wanted all along. *Walter Wasacz*

## BIBIO

## MIND BOKEH

Warp

After six years of releasing music under the name Bibio, UK producer Stephen Wilkinson has practically mastered his style of songcraft, one which relies on pastoral field recordings and touches of folk and soul music. His early albums (*Hand Cranked* and *Vignetting the Compost*) leaned heavier on bucolic, Boards of Canada-esque sounds, but Wilkinson's first album for Warp, 2009's *Ambivalence Avenue*, found the artist diving deeper into his love for homespun pop while leaving enough room for striking beat compositions. On *Mind Bokeh*, Bibio's fifth proper album, the producer attempts to mesh all of his proclivities into a sort of pop LP, with a less than desirable success rate.

When *Bokeh* does work, Wilkinson's arsenal of off-kilter rhythms, vintage instrument tones, lo-fi-sounding vocal hooks, analog synths, and crisp electronics channel the soul of classic AM radio hits. Though the comparison may seem unfair considering Bibio's experience, those tracks—songs like "Pretentious," "Wake Up!," "Feminine Eye," and "Light Seep"—bear a striking sonic resemblance to chillwaver Neon Indian. Then there are the other songs. The saccharine guitar and synth loops on "Artists' Valley" seem written solely for a car commercial, while "K Is for Kelson" relies on a bevy of cheeseball hooks. "Take Your Shirt Off" might as well be a Red Hot Chili Peppers tribute. "Excuses" can't decide whether it should be a mysterious opener, a somber ballad, or a noisy beat suite. With more misses than hits on Bibio's new LP, it's apparent that his influences are best served separately rather than blended together. *Patric Fallon*

## DISCODEINE

## DISCODEINE

Dirty

The Parisian duo of Pentile and edit maven Pilooski admirably pump fresh blood into mutant disco on their debut album as Discodeine. "We dance to organized noise," sings Pulp's Jarvis Cocker, keenly, on lead single, "Synchronize." Backing Cocker's claim is a nimble, Moroder-disco melodrama of pulsating synth riffs and orchestral flourishes. This is ripe, modern disco that's commercial enough to lure suburbanites into Target and skeezy enough to entertain smack addicts (as seen in the tune's music video).

But oddly enough, "Synchronize" comes across as a coldly calculated attempt at pop fame on this album, as the duo mainly indulges in synth-disco experiments. Unfortunately, a few disposable misfires sap the album's

momentum, such as the twee steel-drum jam "Falkenberg" and the twerpy, wonky synth workout "Relaps." Guest Matias Aguayo delivers a brief moment of welcomed sleeze on "Singular" by slithering his hissed vocals around an otherwise generic, robotic groove that plods along at a treadmill pace. What saves this album are Discodeine's departures into the ambient realm: An ethereal harp melody opens "Antiphonie" before it's broken up and looped into a mesmerizing machine groove; the 10-minute closer, "Figures in a Soundscape," beautifully places a sad guitar drone that hovers while a snake-charming synth riff emerges and melts away the minutes. Those two tracks possess an adventurous sensibility that's sorely needed in the DFA disco age, a time when ironic quotation marks are placed on too many grooves. *Cameron Macdonald*

## FALTYDL

## YOU STAND UNCERTAIN

Planet Mu

To be honest, it has been difficult to write about FaltyDL's second full-length record, but not because it disappoints—on the contrary, *You Stand Uncertain* might be one of the most exciting records to come out this year. The New York resident (a.k.a. Drew Lustman), whose earliest productions were classified as IDM and dubstep, has been expanding his sound effortlessly since the release of his 2009 debut full-length, *Love Is a Liability*, and nowhere is this sonic widening more evident than on this latest effort.

In more ways than one, Lustman seems to be following in the footsteps of Cornwall's most famous son, Richard D. James; perhaps one of the only differences is that Lustman eschews James' tactic of using many aural aliases. For

example, a piece like "Lucky Luciano," with its rapid-fire changes in rhythm and tone, is very much in line with James' work as The Tuss. The record's title track, with its Detroit-meets-garage framework, sounds like a long-lost slice from James' early days or the Analord series, and "It's All Good" is an IDM offering of moody bass wobbles, washed-out high-frequency samples, and lush notes drawn out to blissful ends. Sure, pieces like the skittery "Brazil" most definitely fall under the rubric of dubstep, but they're preceded by the distorted funk of "Open Spaces," and often followed by the Theo Parrish-like slow-motion techno of "Voyager." What's more, the record doesn't feel like a cobbling together of disparate styles—it flows beautifully.

In short, it is rare to find a producer who can craft many types of tracks so consistently well, but with *You Stand Uncertain*, FaltyDL has cemented himself as such. *Thomas Rees*

## JAY HAZE

## LOVE = EVOLUTION

Contexterior

It goes without saying that for the past 10 years, Jay Haze has been one of the most interesting and engaging techno producers around, dealing with sounds as diverse as new classical, African and Latin American musics, and, of course, the minimal house genre. His dynamism and enthusiasm will be sorely missed, as *Love = Evolution* will be his final album, and will also mark the shutdown of his Tuning Spork and Contexterior imprints. (It is worth noting, however, that Haze is not halting his musical output entirely, just shifting his priorities towards smaller releases as well as humanitarian causes).

The good news is that his swan song is an 11-song collection that sonically embodies everything that Haze does well—from the shimmering synths and disembodied voices of the title track to the Chicago house-flavored groove of "The Darkest Disco" (a collaboration with occasional partner-in-crime Ricardo Villalobos), *Love = Evolution* delivers what could be a perfect record. The wonky dubstep of "The Light," featuring Paul St. Hilaire, plays nicely off of the lushly dark Tangerine Dream sound of "I'm Riding High," and the plaintive tech-house of "I Wait for You" (featuring vocalist Laila Tov) contrasts nicely against the album closer, a subtly pulsing number which echoes The Aztec Mystic releases from Underground Resistance. As a listener, one can only marvel at and appreciate Haze's dedication to approaching sound from as many different angles as possible, as *Love = Evolution* is most certainly one of the high notes in Haze's storied tenure as a producer. Let's hope that he continues to follow his own path on future releases. *Thomas Rees*

## GIL SCOTT-HERON AND JAMIE XX

## WE'RE NEW HERE

XL

Venturing out from his beatmaking work as one third of international indie darlings The xx, here Jamie xx (né Jamie Smith) gets to fully indulge his own predilection for the sparest of dubstep/post-dubstep via the fantastic and fantastically unclassifiable post-everything comeback record of OG of OGs Gil-Scott Heron. *We're New Here* is ostensibly a remix record of Heron's 2010 *I'm New Here*, but "remix" is a bit of a misnomer, as so much of that original record is stripped naked and rebuilt nearly from scratch. Consider the cool handclap blues of "New York Is Killing Me," which Jamie xx renders as a cut-up dubsteppy haunt of tinny electronic melody, skittering drums, and moody fog. The title track also receives an enjoyable overhaul, as it's reworked through a palette of synth glimmer and tumbling bass—again, something like dubstep—and sounds not so much like a remix as an out-and-out cover.

Considering that Heron's version is itself a cover of a Smog song, the end result is a kind of bizarre funhouse mirror that morphs together the mostly faithful Heron version, the self-consciously simple and spare original, and a slice of future-forward UK bass music courtesy of Jamie xx.

There are moments—quite a few of them—on *We're New Here* that are gaspingly pretty and deep, but as a companion piece to the original, there's an unsettling weirdness: what keeps that first record together is Heron, particularly his cool, seen-it-all, out-of-time persona and not so much style or composition, but xx's work loses that in favor of binding the record with the sound of the present. It certainly fits, but you just might miss what's been lost. *Michael Byrne*

## DENIZ KURTEL

## MUSIC WATCHING OVER ME

Crosstown Rebels

Now that she's established herself as a successful visual artist, employing LEDs and mirrors in her interactive installations, Deniz Kurtel is putting in her bid as a legitimate producer with this debut full-length album. She's released a few singles over the last couple of years via Wolf+ Lamb and Crosstown Rebels, including "The L Word" and "Yeah" (both of which appear here, the latter in altered form), and *Music Watching Over Me* is mostly in step with her previous material, albeit in a format that allows her lean, tech-house aesthetic to unfold in a more spacious form over 70-plus minutes. It begins somewhat sluggishly with "Makya" and the less-than-compelling "My Ass," but takes off with the buoyant "Best Of" and "The L Word," the best and most lively track here, which pairs a couple of infectious synth loops and an inspired guest appearance by vocalist



Jada for a luminous, alluring result. The record ranges impressively in style from the spare ambiance of "Equilibrium" to straight acid passages throughout the album version of "Yeah," and Kurtel definitely gives her tracks enough room to breathe, but some of these tracks are a bit lacking in melody and vitality, pleasant in execution but less exhilarating than seems to have been intended. Although it drags in parts, *Music Watching Over Me* is, at the very least, an intriguing introduction with some stellar moments worthy of repeat rotation. For a DJ so early in her career, it's an admirable debut, and a sure sign of interesting sounds to come from her direction. *Michael Harkin*

## SIRIUSMO

## MOSAİK

Monkeytown

The cover photo for Berlin producer Moritz Friedrich's album *Mosaik* depicts a scene that looks like a drug-addicted teenager's messy bedroom. Picture a pile of junk littered with toy figures, a Casio keyboard taped to a shotgun handle, white Mickey Mouse gloves, glue, balloons, candles, and cables. The image is an apt metaphor for Siriusmo's manic energy and playful ideas. *Mosaik* bursts with dramatic mood shifts and youthful sturm und drang manifest as clubby techno, glitchy hip-hop, and whomping dubstep tracks. Taken as a whole, the album sounds like a house-party mixtape, as its multiple styles and genres are all crammed into a 57-minute presentation. But it's not all an ADD mess, as Friedrich's execution is sharp and challenging; the album is a rollercoaster ride where you can't tell

what's around the next turn, but you know it's probably exciting.

Opening with "High Together"—a number that evokes early Daft Punk or Chemical Brothers—we're immediately thrust into freaky electro territory on CD-bonus track "Sirimande," which sounds like drum & bass producer Jonny L's hit "Piper" remade by lazer-house star Sinden. Friedrich makes club-friendly tracks that aren't needlessly drawn out and adds a little late-20th-century nostalgia to the mix. *Mosaik*'s best songs put a novel spin on '90s IDM and dance palettes, whether it's DJ Shadow-style scratch collages or wonky, arpeggiated electronica. Elsewhere, the coyly named "Bad Idea" mines the sample bin with abandon, while "Einmal in der Woche Schreien" ("Cry Once a Week") is jubilant Italo house tinted with Friedrich's deft sonic acrylics. Overall, *Mosaik*'s many shards form a coherent but explosive picture. *Tomas A. Palermo*

## WOLF + LAMB VS. SOUL CLAP

## DJ-KICKS

IK7

Can four DJs coexist on one mix? *DJ-Kicks* thinks Brooklyn's Wolf + Lamb and Boston's Soul Clap can. These like-minded duos upturn the sad times promised by their ironically bummed-out cover photos by mixing a big-hearted, slow-tempo house cocktail stirred with vintage techno to transport even the coldest hearts to warmer climes and good times.

Where other DJs tapped by the series used their mixes to aggressively flaunt their eclectic tastes, this quartet stays lazer-focused on their own nascent scene, drawing exclusively from their own productions and those of close collaborators and labelmates. So while Double Hill's "Everytime I Go" leans on throttled bluesy vocals for a hook and Greg Paulus' "Suchashame" employs a wandering muted trumpet, they're linked in the mix by the same spacious production, polished keys, and relaxed percussion. Transitional tracks are aggressively shorn down into interludes, letting the more surefire dance-starters like Locussolus' modern disco-house number, "Next To You," work through their paces in full.

But close links can lead to group-think: The album rarely strays from the pillowy tempos that made this double pair's name at their infamous Marcy Hotel party nights. This is absolutely well and good if you're ready to drop into a lush house embrace for a few hours, but it's the offhanded flashes of Soul Clap's energetic R&B edits, Wolf + Lamb's deeper Miami bass influence, or the pure weirdness of the Auto-off-Tuned vocals on "Lonely C" that provide the tart contrast required for a memorable mix. *Rob Geary*

# Bubblin'



## Salva

Los Angeles, CA 

Twenty-nine-year-old Paul Salva has spent most of his life bouncing around the US, as he grew up in Chicago worshipping house (both classic and ghetto) and later moved to Miami, where he dug into bass and electro and fell in love with the 808. After more than a decade of DJing, producing, and throwing parties, he eventually settled in San Francisco, where he founded the Frite Nite label and rubbed elbows with like-minded artists such as Lazer Sword. Now, on the heels of releasing his debut full-length, *Complex Housing*, Salva has gone and moved again, heading south to the wilds of Los Angeles. Southern California isn't exactly lacking in forward-thinking beatmakers, but there's little chance of Salva getting lost in the shuffle. Apart from his own music, he's also launched a collaborative project with Lando Kal, begun producing tracks for leftfield MC Zackey Force Funk, and been tapped to remix Beans and Rainbow Arabia.

[soundcloud.com/salva](https://soundcloud.com/salva)

# Guest Reviews: Rick Wilhite



Techno holds in the top spot in Detroit's fabled dance-music history, but Rick Wilhite has been holding down the house end of the equation for more than two decades. Previously the owner of the Motor City's storied Vibes New and Rare Music record shop, Wilhite also has an extensive resume as a party promoter, DJ, and producer. Often referred to as The Godson, in the mid-'90s Wilhite first released a few records under his own name. During that same era, he also helped launch the 3 Chairs project with Theo Parrish, Kenny Dixon Jr., and Malik Pittman. Following the closure of his store, Wilhite has increased his production output, compiling last year's *Vibes New and Rare Music* compilation for Rush Hour, and this month he'll be releasing his debut full-length album, *Analog Aquarium*, via Still Music. We caught up with Wilhite, fresh off the plane from a DJ tour in Japan, and asked him what tunes have been perking up his veteran ears.

[myspace.com/rickthegodson](https://myspace.com/rickthegodson)

### JOVONN "A DEFINITION OF A TRACK"

Late Night Audio

JoVonn has done it again. He's giving us the true sound of late-night house music on his new *Revival* EP. Just like always, the first song—the original version of "A Definition of a Track"—is real right off the top. This is going into my rotation right now.

### ANDRES TITLE TBA

Mahogani

Andres is coming again. He's a raw Detroit talent who is known for his production skills. This full, four-track release will leave you mesmerized and stunned. Although Andres is viewed as a hip-hop producer, his talent for making house music way exceeds his reputation.

### MOODY "FREEKI MUTHAF CKER (ALL I NEED IS U)"

KDJ

Once again, Moodymann has grabbed our spirit and soul. This 12" also features remixes by two of electronic music's great producers: Juan Atkins and Egyptian Lover. Egyptian Lover takes you back to the '80s with his authentic 808 style, and Juan amazes us with his mid-'80s classic touch.

### STEVIE WONDER "RACE BABBLING (RONDENION EDIT)"

white

"Race Babbling" is dope and sick! More than that, it's a song for whoever is aware. This was given to me directly in Japan by Rondenion. Much love and blessings from The Godson. Keep Japan alive.



### BANJO OR FREAKOUT

London, UK

Italian-born Alessio Natalizia has been playing music since his youth, but it was only after moving to London—not to mention countless days spent on his girlfriend's laptop while waiting for her to get home from work—that he truly found his voice. Natalizia—who is also one half of Kompakt-signed duo Walls—effectively combines the sensibilities of an old-school singer-songwriter with a desire to explore washed-out melodic soundscapes and lo-fi bedroom beats. After releasing a string of singles and compiling hundreds of demos, Banjo or Freakout is finally ready to release his self-titled debut album, which comes out this month via Memphis Industries.

[banjoorfreakout.blogspot.com](https://banjoorfreakout.blogspot.com)



### DAMU

Manchester, UK

Another entry in the long line of British youngsters who have been producing since their teenage years, Sam Schorb's experiments with songwriting actually started on piano and guitar. But the 21-year-old beatsmith eventually made the switch to his laptop, where he first started banging out breakcore and hip-hop tunes before finding his groove in the world of house. These days, he's folding in grime and a heavy dose of synths, which gives his music a particularly melodic quality. Last month he dropped an EP on Silverback, and more music is on the way in 2011 via the esteemed Local Action and Keysound labels.

[soundcloud.com/damu](https://soundcloud.com/damu)



### PHASEONE

St. Louis, MO

What happens when shoegaze collides with early-'90s jungle, footwork, Chicago rap, and a love for Outkast and the greater Dungeon Family collective? Apparently, Phaseone happens. Twenty-six-year-old Andrew Jernigan got his start producing IDM and rap beats for various MCs, but eventually shifted to more blissed-out musical pastures. Last year's two-song entry for Lefse's Way Slow series turned heads, and now Jernigan is at work on a proper Phaseone album, which should at some point see the light of day through the Williams Street label. He's also been bitten by the relocation bug, as this month he's moving from his hometown to the bright lights of New York City.

[phaseonenofun.tumblr.com](https://phaseonenofun.tumblr.com)



### SUBMERSE

Cheshire, UK

Rob Orme's melancholy productions often sound something like *Play*-era Moby making 2-step. That might sound like a dubious proposition, but it really works—check last year's standout "Hold It Down" single on Deadboy's Well Rounded label for proof. Nevertheless, the 23-year-old beatmaker—who cites both videogames and J-Pop as early influences—has been expanding his sonic palette as of late, dabbling in harder, bassline-influenced sounds. 2011 promises another Well Rounded EP, singles on new labels from Doorly and Kanji Kinetic, and a slew of other releases. You can also find him behind the decks at Sub.FM, where he hosts a weekly radio program.

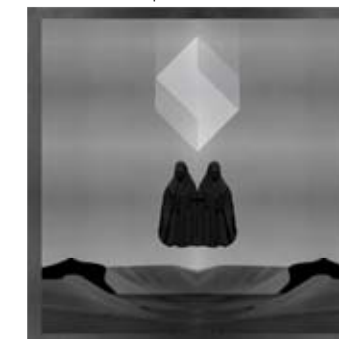
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**Cloud Nothings** *Cloud Nothings*  
LP/CD/digital  
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**Young Magic** *You With Air b/w Sparkly*  
Seven-inch/digital  
Out now on Carpark



**Toro Y Moi** *Underneath The Pine*  
LP/CD/digital  
Out now on Carpark



**Coming Soon**  
Dent May, Deakin, Prince Rama, Young Magic, Light Pollution, Tickle Feather

**Adventure** *Lesser Known*  
LP/CD/digital  
Out March on Carpark



**Panda Bear** *Tomboy*  
LP/CD/digital  
Out April on Paw Tracks



**Ear Pwr** *Ear Pwr*  
LP/CD/digital  
Out May on Carpark



## ISOLÉE: IN THE STUDIO



SIX YEARS AFTER *WE ARE MONSTER*, RAJKO MÜLLER RETURNS TO THE FRAY.

Rajko Müller, known to the world as pioneering microhouse producer Isolée, might not be the most prolific of electronic music's giants. His last full-length was 2005's *We Are Monster*, and his last major single came out in 2009, but his sound is so rich and so much his own that any wait between releases is certain to be worth it. *Well Spent Youth*, his third full-length, out now on DJ Koze's Pampa Records, continues along the path that Müller is known for, as it brims with lush melodies and dense aural textures while maintaining an intense attention to the smallest sonic gestures. We caught Müller in his home in Berlin to discuss the record's process.

**XLR8R: What are some of the more important pieces of equipment in your studio at the moment?**

Rajko Müller: It's mostly just a couple of synthesizers, as I don't use much software. One of my more recent acquisitions is the Pro One by Sequential Circuits. I also have been using my Yamaha VSS-30 and my Roland JX-3P quite a bit. I have a few more, but what I really like to use are some older effects like spring reverbs and analog delays. Definitely, the most important aspect of the studio is the computer. I record on Ableton right now, and consider it a tool like any other piece of gear, where you have lots of simple solutions to make creating a track as easy and quick as possible. Speakers are obviously important, and some of the most difficult studio components to find and set up properly. Right now, I have two sets: my smaller system are Klein & Hummel PAS 100s, and my bigger system is from this German company called G.J. Acoustics. Also, I use a Soundcraft 6000 mixer with 24 channels, which is a good size to have in your home and still feel like you have a proper mixing set-up.

**It's been six years since your last full-length. How has composing and producing tracks changed for you since then?**

I think that the major changes happened before *We Are Monster*, with all the possibilities of the computer with unlimited memory capabilities and so on. Now, you can record and record, and you have the tension that you might never finish something. Before, I would get lost and do more and more versions of things—just let versions pile up. What I was trying to do with *Well Spent Youth* was come more quickly to a finished track, and try to avoid getting lost in possibilities and options.

**Is there any piece of gear that you could single out as being more important than all the others?**

There isn't one piece of equipment that I'm totally dependent on. Sometimes you get lost in all the gear, because really, it's a passion. I know a lot of people who hardly have any gear and just use the computer, and I think in my case, I would be able to make my music without a lot of the gear I have. I could just use the plug-ins and the computer, and it might sound as good as what I currently do, or... maybe even better, I don't know *[laughs]*. But I have a passion for gear. Like, if I have an old analog delay, which is very limited in its possibilities, sometimes it's more interesting and fun to use this on recordings, because then I know it's a little history of equipment rather than just a perfect emulator or whatever. I'm not very into the debate between analog versus digital, but I feel like I want to keep the touch of the original piece of gear, that its character should stay intact.

**Can you describe the process of coming to the acidy yet lush sound of "Hold On"?**

For "Hold On" and most tracks, it's not that easy to trace back how [it] comes to a certain result, especially when you don't have a clear aim when you start to work on something. There are a lot of things that happen intuitively—I work on sequences, cut them, filter them, add beats and other sequences. Sometimes I displace them again and so on, and all of a sudden I come to something that makes sense to me.

**There seems to be a lighter sound on the newer record, both tonally and emotionally, as compared to your other records, which always sounded as if they came from a more icy clime. Is that something that you intended, or is that just what listeners are hearing?**

That is difficult to say, because actually, I don't know if I really thought about those issues while creating the record. But if that's what listeners are hearing, then that's what is there. That's kind of my opinion, you know—that what the listener hears in the music is what is there. It's not me who is going to define it. It's very interesting, this impression that you and others have about the new record, and all I can say is that I'm okay with it.

*Well Spent Youth* is out now on Pampa.  
isolee.de

## SEEFEEEL'S STUDIO APPROACH



Ever since their genesis in the '90s, UK outfit Seefeel has straddled the line between electronic and ambient rock music so craftily that they've more or less erased it altogether. Whether crafting Krauty, atmospheric shoegaze, or remixing their peers, the quartet—whose founding members Mark Clifford and Sarah Peacock have since adopted bassist Shigeru "Shige" Ishihara (a.k.a. DJ Scotch Egg) and former Boredoms drummer Iida Kazuhisa—continues to make music that is simultaneously challenging and breathtaking, particularly on their recently released, self-titled Warp full-length. Here Clifford tells us about some of the considerations that went into making the LP, and what you might consider for your own productions. *Ken Taylor*

### Approach every song differently

I try not to really approach recording with a set method. "Aug30," for example, was a jam that Shige and I did, and what you hear is pretty much as it happened—bar a few edits, as the track was much longer. On the other hand, "Faults" began as a programmed rhythm and it gradually progressed by adding vocals to a very different guitar part. Then Shige added bass, which then changed as a new guitar part was added. It was very much a studio track passing back and forth between us and being built up and stripped back over a few weeks. So the process varies, but all guitars and vocals are processed before they go onto hard disk, and very few plug-ins or computer processes are used [prior to editing].

### Experiment with guitars, strings, and tuning

I tend to use Strat-like guitars for the most part because they give lighter sounds, which suits the effects I like to use. Likewise, I use a very light-gauge string. Often, I tune the guitar so I

have two or more strings more tightly strung. For example, I will tune the G string to a B-flat because I like the tone this can add.

### Merge live instruments with electronic elements when it feels right

I think it's always important to not think of things as electronic or rock, because they are just elements of the whole. So I would never add an electronic part for the sake of it or to make it some kind of hybrid. I only use what I think works with a particular track. I have never thought, "Too many real rock sounds in this track—better add an electronic part." It's just whatever works for each track.

### Manage your live set-up and studio set-up

The live set-up can be more restrictive than the studio, which forces you to be creative—in the sense that we might, for example, use analog reverbs or delays in the studio which are too cumbersome to tour with, so they're

replaced by simpler units for the stage. We also use backing tracks live to play mainly percussion parts. Of course, it would be nice to have a percussionist to recreate those parts, but this is where knowing what elements don't need as much human touch as others comes in handy, and that takes time, and good ears, to perfect. But for the most part, I think live, we use pretty much what we use in the studio, certainly as far as the guitars go.

### Use effects to round out your sound

Despite it being maybe the least noticed by most people's ears, compressors were the most used piece of outboard gear on the new album. Practically every part is compressed to some extent, and some vocal and guitar parts are heavily gated. I find it much easier to mix when each part sits in its own space. Likewise, EQ is also a very important tool!

Seefeel is out now on Warp.  
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## 03 /'11 COMPONENTS

## Moog Slim Phatty analog synthesizer

MSRP: \$849; moogmusic.com



The Slim Phatty, presumably named for its keyboard-less, compact, two-voice design, and highly tweakable room-filling sonics, is the latest instrument to join Moog's pack of classic machines. Essentially, the Slim Phatty is the sound engine of a Little Phatty (the unit's keyboard-equipped older brother), in a wedge-like module that is both rackmountable or tabletop. Classic wood side panels are available separately for that timeless, Giorgio Moroder-approved look. And like all of the newer Moog synths, the backlighting on the tactile buttons and bright LED markers for the dials are not only clear and useful, but darn rave-tastic with the studio lights down.

Like its older brother, the Slim Phatty includes a wealth of up-to-date features, including MIDI-over-USB with high-resolution messaging (you can easily record your movements as automation in your DAW and run that MIDI back through the unit, not only saving the performance but also making adjustments in the key editor for the perfect pass). Not forgetting its old-school origins, the Slim Phatty provides a 100% analog signal path and keeps the classic voltage-control method of speaking to other machines well intact. Using the CV feature, you can really go modular, hooking up all sorts of vintage and modern analog boxes to create your own BBC Radiophonic Workshop. And, as an added bonus, while most analog synths are not known for their mobility, this one is svelte enough to fit in your backpack, allowing the instrument to shine onstage as well.

While you can coax the sort of Moog-style squelch and punishing subsonics that will have you watching your bass bins (see the "O.L." button to kick in an oomph of overload drive), a mere sweep of a filter and tweak of dial on this synth can conjure up an equally impactful bevy of cosmic, ambient, and Balearic delights. Another huge plus is the ability to send external audio through the Slim Phatty via a rear input for some wicked filtering, effectively giving you Mooger Fooger pedal-style processing in the same box. It all adds up to a cost-effective and highly recommended way of getting the legendary Moog sound into a studio of any size. *Ryan Edwards*



## Denon DN-MC6000 mixer and MIDI controller

MSRP: \$949; denondj.com

The march of the digital DJ solutions continues. Denon's DN MC-6000 goes for the all-in-one approach, built for the club with its steel chassis and rackmountability. It's designed to work with Traktor and Virtual DJ, and while it's not as tightly integrated with either software as NI's S4 is with Traktor, it's a somewhat more versatile unit. The mixer can take external sources (up to four, line/phono) and mix them without a computer connected. It's festooned with a slew of buttons and knobs (perhaps too many, in fact), including eight hot-cue/sampler buttons, and a host of outputs like balanced XLR, along with unbalanced and booth outputs. It can handle audio and/or video with its switchable crossfader, and has a number of effects built in as well. Those looking for an adaptable, high-end controller won't be disappointed with this reasonably portable, club-ready set-up. *Evan Shamoon*



## iZotope Stutter Edit editing software

MSRP: \$249; izotope.com

For those who enjoy chopping, slicing, and generally mangling their beats to no end, Stutter Edit may just be the new Cuisinart. Perhaps most importantly, it provides hands-on control: While software like Ableton's Beat Repeat, Audio Damage's Replicant, and SmartElectronix's free Livecut plug-in (among others) all allow for various forms of stuttery sonic chaos, Stutter Edit is built to actually be played by the user. It can perform repeats, bit-reduction, buffer and pitch effects, and more, all of which are automatically mapped to the keys of your MIDI controller, and all of which can be manually combined, modulated, and otherwise custom-configured. There are even generative patches, which can add layers of synthesized audio to the tracks under its dominion. This is an excellent tool for stage or studio.

ES



## Arturia Spark beat production center

MSRP: \$599; arturia.com

Priced to compete with Native Instrument's Maschine, the Arturia Spark is also a hybrid software/hardware package designed particularly with beat production in mind. In the sound department, Arturia partners its considerable synthesis muscles with third parties like Sonic Reality and Uberschall to compile an impressive synthesized and sample-based instrument library. All told, Spark features no less than 480 instruments and 30 acoustic and electronic kits. Spark is housed in a slick white-and-grey aluminium case with a hefty bunch of knobs, pads, and buttons. Controller functions include eight velocity-sensitive MPC-style pads, an X/Y pad, a 16-track mixer, and something like 30 dedicated and assignable knobs. Direct access to shuffle and shift modes and a 16-key, 64-step sequencer all add up to a pretty impressive piece of gear and one more contender in what could someday become an MPC-killing genre. *Roger Thomasson*

## Akai Synthstation49 iPad audio controller

MSRP: \$199; akai.com



While the iPad has many of us daydreaming about the possibilities that a multi-touch, WiFi-enabled tablet presents for music production and performance, we've yet to see much that gets us drooling. The SynthStation49 isn't quite the revolution we're imagining, but it's still a nice little tool that does its part to bridge the gap between iPad fantasy and reality. The MPC pads and transport buttons are as expected, and the angle-adjustable iPad dock is cool. But a couple of features did actually get our hearts beating a couple ticks faster. Not only does the SynthStation49 sport a stereo set of quarter-inch jacks suitable for routing the output to a recording device or PA mixer, but it also allows players to record all MIDI information (and audio) directly to the iPad (cool, especially if you do a lot of improvisatory knob-twiddling), and it's fully CoreMIDI compliant, which means it is compatible with any other CoreMIDI iPad app right out of the box. *RT*

## Marvel vs. Capcom 3

Capcom; X360/PS3



While the rest of the world waits for Captain America, Thor, and Iron Man to finally get their shit together on screen, you, my main man, need not wait a minute longer! *Marvel vs. Capcom 3* allows not only for Earth's Mightiest Heroes to assemble right before your eyes, but also some X-Men, a couple of zombie enthusiasts, some robots, a busty demon hunter, and a dog. All told, you can mix and match a team of three out nearly 40 far-out characters from both Marvel's and Capcom's respective histories in a bid to overcome Galactus, the world-devouring demigod. Epic story aside, *MvC3* is, above all, a pixel pugilist's paradise with as deep and quick a fighting system as has ever been realized, complimented by batshit-crazy backgrounds ranging from the Rainbow Bridge of Thor's Asgard to the hooker-infused slums (we wish) of NYC. Online play and super moves also abound, sweetening the pot since the last entry 11 years ago. We've had two good *Spider-Man* movies, 0.75 good *Hulks*, and no good *Fantastic Fours* since then—and *MvC3* licks them all. *Ryan Rayhill*

## Killzone 3

Sony; PS3

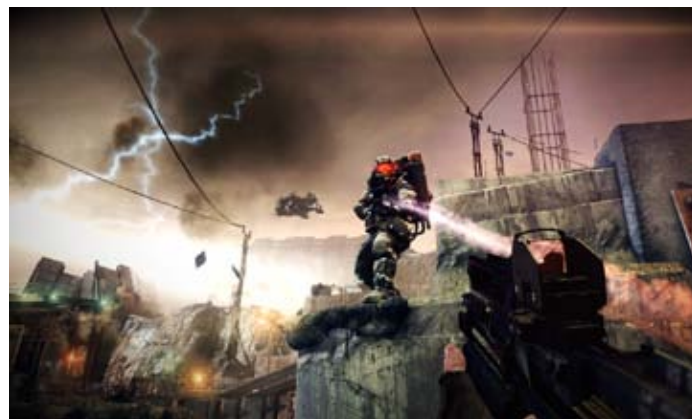
If, like most American consumers, you can't get enough of that bang-zoom 3D that's sweeping the nation... and you love splattering the brains of alien invaders across the purple mountain majesty with a wave of your hand, then do we have a treat for you. *Killzone 3* is one of the first games to not only support full 3D graphics (it can also be played in normal 2D), but also Sony's Move motion controller, making it one of the most immersive first-person shooters out there as you and your partner blast your way out of a bloody civil war between two political factions on an alien world after a black hole is left in their seat of power. This is, naturally, due to you blowing their dictator's brains out in the previous game. Remember? Good job, bro. *Killzone 3* also offers up some new features like jet packs, exo-skeleton suits, and murderous melee attacks like neck-snapping, throat-slitting, and the timeless classic that is the eye gouge. As should be expected with any self-respecting modern-day shooter, *Killzone 3* offers a robust online component so you and your yahoo friends can continue your ongoing debate over who is a bigger douche while blasting away at strangers in the comfort of your own home. *RR*

## Okamiden

Capcom; DS



2006's *Okami* was as stirringly breathtaking as it was criminally overlooked. So it's nothing short of a minor miracle that despite its forebear's poor sales, the sequel, *Okamiden*, is actually seeing the light of day. Playing much like *The Legend of Zelda* meets calligraphy class, *Okamiden* puts you in the paws of the little wolf god, Chibiterasu, offspring of the original's divine protagonist, as you and your human companion battle against demons straight out of Japanese lore. Visually, the game looks like a sumi-e illustration come to life on a woodblock print, and like its predecessor, you will use the Celestial Brush to draw symbols and script that can be used as both weapons against dark forces and tools with which you can affect the game world. However, this time around, you will actually be doing the pen work yourself on the DS touchscreen, making for a much more immersive experience. If you like stunning handheld visuals, Japanese stuff, and corporate redemption, do Capcom and yourself a favor and get on this immediately! *RR*



**DISAPPEARS** GUIDER krank151

"*Guider* is an intriguing, viscerally stirring study in contemporary post-punk that holds attention like a fox in a headlight beam."  
*Drowned in Sound*

**TIM HECKER** RAVEDEATH, 1972 krank154

"Montreal soundscaper *Tim Hecker* is one of the great ambient artists of the last decade. We can't think of another producer in the field who's had such an unstoppable winning streak over the past ten years."  
*Altered Zones*

**BELONG** COMMON ERA krank155

"Nerve-wracking, romantic, intense, and hardly there at all."  
*Pitchfork*

**IMPLODES** BLACK EARTH krank156

"*Implodes* is all kinds of big guitar damage: shoegaze fuzz blasts, sparkly drone, slicks of tuneful sludge, distortion so thick it obscures the keyboards, the vocals, and even the drums."  
*Chicago Reader*



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## CONSTANT FLUX BUILDING BEAUTIFUL MONSTERS COMING SOON

Using a vast array of sound synthesis techniques and technology, Constant Flux crafts eerily beautiful sonic textures that take on a life all their own. His music continues to be informed by urban architecture and infrastructure, as well as by forms found in nature.

### Editorial remarks about past releases

Constant Flux spews his beats over fluid backgrounds, creating a clear-yet-cluttered style that fills your ears but never overwhelms them. — *Mixer*

Many of the tracks feel like love songs for artificially intelligent beings. — *Remix*

L.A.-based producer Douglas Rimerman aka Constant Flux brings IDM in for a landing, taking the genre's outer-space vibe by the hand and leading it to the edge of the dance floor. The result is a moving collection of experimental breaks that may not satisfy strictly dance types but will surely inspire head-bobbing and shoulder jerking for those with ears as open as their minds. — *San Francisco Examiner*

Constant Flux is a member of ASCAP and The Recording Academy.

Graphics by leftimgraphics.com



### Dragon Age 2

EA; Xbox 360, PS3



With a story told in framed narrative (à la Princess Bride) and taking place over an entire decade filled with swords, sorcery, and sexy time, *Dragon Age 2* follows the adventures of a steely badass named Hawke (who can be male or female) as he/she rises from homeless to hero. Collecting a small army of warlocks and warriors to aid your travels, this action RPG features an intuitive mix of strategic character building with good old-fashioned button mashing as you lay waste to the legions of orcs, giant spiders, and sleazy wizards that stand in the way of your greatness. However, your personality will be just as important as your physical prowess, as all of your dealings will affect how the rest of the world treats you and how your story plays out. If you're charming and savvy, you may have an easier time taking down evil—and perhaps a few pantaloons in the process. That's right, you can totally get your dragon slain in this game. When you boil it right down, what last year's *Mass Effect 2* was to the space-age sci-fi kids, this month's *Dragon Age 2* is for the *Dungeons & Dragons* set. And as a squealing teenage girl for both games, we could not be more chuffed. RR

### Crysis 2

EA; Xbox 360, PS3



You want more aliens, you say? You long to see a visually stunning version of New York City in catastrophic ruins once more? A silent, well-armed hero to quell the invading threat would be just what the doctor ordered, you're thinking? Well, it's your lucky day. *Crysis 2* takes the limit-pushing beauty of the PC original and somehow makes the sequel look even more spectacular on the home consoles as you take on the role of Alcatraz, a super-soldier with an even more super suit that allows you to more or less become Superman as you battle an alien horde in the burnt-out husk of the Big Apple. In addition to all manner of wild weapons, the aforementioned suit allows for many displays of inhuman feats, ranging from god-like leaps across the tattered cityscape to nigh invisibility, making silent kills from behind that much more nasty. While this all may sound like standard fare for a first-person shooter, when played in 3D, as you are able to do, *Crysis 2* really shows what it's made of, as buildings collapse around you, enemy fire grazes past your dome, and falls from high places actually give you wicked vertigo. RR

### PlayStation Move Heroes

Sony; PS3



If you have been a longtime PlayStation fanboy/girl, then get out a fresh pair of jeans because the ones you are wearing are about to be heavily creamed. Starring six of Sony's most popular characters from the worlds of Ratchet, Jak, and Sly Cooper, *PlayStation Move Heroes* thrusts our heroes and their sidekicks into battle against some world-gobbling maleficence or another. But the real story here is that this is the first major adventure game made exclusively for Sony's waggly new controller, the Move. As such, much of the in-game action focuses on you swinging, flinging, or bowling various weapons at your adversaries. While not the hardest core of games, *PlayStation Move Heroes* provides a colorful, lighthearted respite from the onslaught of titles awash in grit, gore, and general gnarlitude. RR



### Yakuza 4

Sega; PS3

You ever hear the story about the Japanese guy who owed the Yakuza money that he couldn't pay up so they took him out to a shed in the woods, nailed his dick to the wall, set the place on fire, and then handed him a knife before they drove off? I'm pretty sure that doesn't happen in *Yakuza 4*, but you can extort money from business owners, sing karaoke, and create the number-one hostess bar in all of Tokyo! This, of course, is just the tip of the katana, as you play out an entire Japanese mob drama in the role of one of four characters, each with his own weapons, moves, and stories, in an effort to navigate the seedy criminal underworld. Several parts of Tokyo have been painstakingly recreated along with a few fictionalized versions of real spots like the red-light district. We imagine this is because the game makers didn't want to end up offending anyone and subsequently find their own birds tacked to a tree. With a soundtrack featuring big-time Japanese hip-hoppers and DJs, *Yakuza 4* is ichiban for the civilly grimy. RR

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OUTBOX

## MOGWAI

Love 'em or hate 'em, the endearingly brash post-rock hooligans of Scotland's veteran instrumental export, Mogwai, are an inspiration for aspiring and seasoned musicians around the globe. The five-piece has more or less maintained its core roster since the release of its monolithic debut album, *Young Team*, which has always lent the band's cinematic music a tight-knit sense of kinship. Fourteen years, seven studio albums, two film soundtracks, and one live DVD later, Mogwai is still a brotherhood, something which remains glowingly apparent in the 10 eclectic compositions that make up its latest LP, the excellently titled *Hardcore Will Never Die, But You Will*. We got a chance to catch up with Barry Burns as he and the rest of the clan geared up for another world tour, and the multi-instrumentalist let us in on the band's top five favorite beers, how much he loves Frank Black, and why one should never order "The Mogwai" at the pub. *Patric Fallon*

**What can you see and hear when standing outside of your recording studio, Castle of Doom?**

The last time we were there recording the album, we saw yellow police tape and many police officers as there had been (another) murder in Glasgow. You can usually hear the sound of a building site. It really is in a horrible area.

**Mogwai has been an institution in the instrumental/post-rock scene since the mid-'90s, surviving well into the digital revolution. When did you first become the victim of album leaks and illegal downloading?**

I honestly can't remember, but I think it was probably *Rock Action*, as people seemed to know the songs when we played a concert [before] the album was out.

**Any good, new bands coming out of Glasgow these days?**

Yeah. Remember Remember, Errors, and Moon Unit to name three.

**If there was a drink called "The Mogwai," what would be in it?**

Vomit, tea, and whiskey. No straws.

**Give us three of Mogwai's musical idols.**

Michael Rother, John McKeown, Wullie Rogan.

**Your discography only boasts one remix album. When can we expect *Kicking a Dead Pig Vol. 2*?**

Not really sure we'll do another one, but who can say?

**If you were ever to allow your albums to be pilfered for use in a television series, what would the show have to be about?**

The complete annihilation of all religion. Is that too much? Eeeeeeeek.



**Any thoughts on Mogwai's imitators?**

It's kind of flattering as much as it is pointless. A lot of bands need a starting point, and as long as they go on to do something original, then it's totally fine by us.

**In the press release for your latest record, *Hardcore Will Never Die, But You Will*, you say the title is "ned-inspired." What exactly is a "ned"?**

The etymology of the word is a bit unknown, but it is possibly an abbreviation for Non-Educated Delinquent. A west-of-Scotland teenage troublemaker, bored [with] nothing to do in the streets other than piss people off with their stupid behavior.

**We already know that "Blur Are Shite." Tell us who else are shite.**

No, no—we love everybody these days. We try not to bash people anymore. It's old behavior. A bit like a ned.

**Who's the creep on the cover of *Come On Die Young*?**

That would be our bass player Dominic. Or Demonic, in this case.

**At this point in its history, Mogwai seems to have done everything. Name three goals you still hope to achieve before the band is through.**

Franchise the band so we can stay at home with our families and let impostors play our concerts for us. Play a concert with Funkadelic. Do a soundtrack for another film.

**The title for *Hardcore's* last song, "You're Lionel Richie," is a quote from an inebriated encounter with the legendary musician. What other celebrities have you drunkenly approached?**

Frank Black. But I was, in the end, too shy to speak to him. I love him.

**Before settling on Mogwai, what other band names were tossed around?**

I think that was the first and last suggestion. At least until something better came along.

**Top five favorite beers. Go!**

Zirndorfer, Sierra Nevada, Rothaus, Midnight Sun, and 80 Shilling.

*Hardcore Will Never Die, But You Will*. is out now on Sub Pop.  
mogwai.co.uk

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